

# **Horizon**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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**THE AMERICANISM OF HART CRANE**

*by* D. S. SAVAGE

**THE ART OF BEING FREE:**

**(i) FLAUBERT IN 1870**

*by* ANTHONY GOLDSMITH

**(ii) IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS**

*by* ANDRÉ GIDE

**SCOTTISH PAINTINGS**

*by* JOHN TONGE

**THE FACE OF ENGLAND**

*by* C. E. M. JOAD

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMMENT	297
LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES—IV (Drawing) Osbert Lancaster	301
THE AMERICANISM OF HART CRANE D. S. Savage	302
THE ART OF BEING FREE:	
(i) FLAUBERT IN 1870 Anthony Goldsmith	309
(ii) IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS André Gide	316
SCOTTISH PAINTINGS John Tonge	331
THE FACE OF ENGLAND C. E. M. Joad	335
SELECTED NOTICES:	
PUT OUT MORE FLAGS Peter Quennell	348
PEOPLE IN PRODUCTION Arthur Calder-Marshall	350
A LIVING DEATH Sybille Bedford	353
CORRESPONDENCE from Alex Comfort, Rohan D'O. Butler, Franz Borkenau	
REPRODUCTIONS OF PAINTINGS by John Maxwell, Edward Baird, Robert Colquhoun, Robert MacBryde, between pages 334 and 335	

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# COMMENT

THIS is the time when one is overcome by a desire to speak the truth. Spring reminds us that the English were once a migrant species, taking wing at Easter for Paris, Rome, and Seville or the ten-day mystery cruise. Deprived of such opportunities the desire returns in its negative form, as an angry protest against the office walls and street walls against which we knock our heads till they are bald and polished. Let us say a few honest words before we resume the milling and grinding of our domes towards the correct Austerity glaze.

First about writers and the war. There is a very good job going which brings in about five hundred a year and carries with it, of course, permanent exemption. It is that of being Adviser on Artists. The Artist and the War. The Future of the Artist. The Artist and the New World. The Artist and the Blitz. War and the Artist. Anyone who can manage to get an article printed on any of these subjects will soon find that he is on to a good thing. And yet writing about artists does not make Art, and it is time to realize that every essay, every broadcast, every conversation about the artist and this or that is so much wasted time, and springs out of a sense of guilt and sterility. Are plumbers the unacknowledged legislators of mankind? Should plumbers be political? Should they plumb for plumbing's sake? These questions are neither asked nor answered—but should a poet live in Chelsea or Hampstead? or receive double rations? or accept a part-time job in a Ministry? These problems, to those who know how to answer them in a few thousand words with a blunt yes-and-no, are a wartime gold-mine. The artist in Russia has the largest income, in America the strongest head, in Ireland the bitterest tongue, in France the cheapest food, in Switzerland the sublimest scenery, in Central Europe the best political education. In England he has only the wind and the rain and Reconstruction.

Behind this spate of speculation, and discussion on what services the artist renders and what rewards he should receive, lies a fallacy—the fallacy of the War—Art antithesis, by which warriors are encouraged to become critical of the part played by artists, and artists anxious to assert their importance in face of war. War is only an incident in history, it is not so unlike peace as to require any violent adaptive convulsions from him, in fact it only

changes the artist insomuch as war enforces totalitarianism, and drives the artist to make the best terms he can with the State. But in continually defending his 'position' the artist is weakening it by ceasing to produce any Art. It is far better to say with Whistler 'Art happens', and then keep silent and hope for the best.

The other pattern is to retreat, while still writing and talking about Art, further and further into those territories where the artist-administrator functions, and this is to get the worst of both worlds, for the artist-administrator in the Civil Service or the B.B.C. is not only prevented from writing by the pressure of work, but his life offers him no material for future creation. These artists will emerge from the war with no artistic achievement and no pent-up artistic energy. They will have talked or minutised their works away, and may even have taken a violent dislike to the literary atmosphere, just when the frustrated writers in Libya or the R.A.F. are panting for culture. To sum up, there are only two places where an artist can possess leisure and irresponsibility today—prison and the sanatorium—Brixton may produce another *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Ulysses* at any moment.

I would therefore declare a moratorium on Art till the war is over. All writers who feel that they are in the war and responsible for winning it should be excused literary activity, and even forbidden it. This alone would remove their guilt, and put an end to the paper-covered books in which they express it.

What would they do instead? Their spare time would be devoted to reading. The war is not conducive to good writing—that can wait till afterwards—but it is a magnificent opportunity for good reading. This many writers have discovered, as can be seen from the constant process of revaluation and stocktaking in our heritage that is going on. But what is wanted is a planned course of reading by which writers are able to profit when the war is over. In planning this reading writers should accept as the first premise that they cannot be too serious, that the worst defect of English writing is its amateurishness, it is a pastime which does not require any basic knowledge of history, psychology, or even of the meaning of words. I would suggest that every writer employed his spare time in this war in coming to terms with science—in other words, in bridging the gulf which has existed between science and Art and which has been so widened by those recent discoveries of science which require a scientific training before



they can be comprehended. The ideal would be a crop of writers who could not say 'I love you' without understanding exactly what is meant by I, love, and you—in the language of biology, psychology, philosophy, and semantics. This divorce between Art and Science, the two great flowerings of the human spirit, is quite artificial, and proceeds from the romantic conception of Art as something which is mysterious and inaccessible, and from the equally superficial prejudice of scientists against the curiosity of the laymen. Yet the first people whose artists and scientists understand each other will enjoy the cultural leadership of the world.

How should a writer tackle science? It is clear that most writers have no time to undergo any scientific training—there are, however, certain books that make the subject easy. One is the *Science of Life*, of which a new edition is just coming out. This is the most fascinating of all compendiums, and contains incidentally, for those who know how to find them, the plots of about fourteen hundred novels. It is very pleasantly written, and when we have finished it the world can never look quite the same to us. It may shock or irritate in parts, it may be wrong, but it is the greatest achievement of Wells and Huxley. Another very good basic book is Gollancz' *Outline of Modern Knowledge*, which is about ten years old, and which consists of a survey of science, philosophy, and psychology, economics, political science, history, etc., by various experts. Much of this is stiff going, but the humanist writer will find that it helps him to those subjects which he can specialize in, and warns him of those which he is quite unfitted to grasp. These books lead on, through their bibliographies, to many others, not forgetting a quantity of scientific Penguins, or such compilations as Kegan Paul's enormous *Bible of the World* (21s.), which includes most of the Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Mohammedan scriptures. I like particularly the first precept of the Yogin Swatmaram Swami: 'The practicer of Hathayoga should live alone in a small hermitage or monastery situated in a place free from rocks, water and fire; of the extent of a bow's length and in a fertile country ruled over by a virtuous king where he will not be disturbed. The hermitage should have a very small door, and should be without any windows. It should be very clean, being daily smeared over with cow dung, and should be free of all insects.'

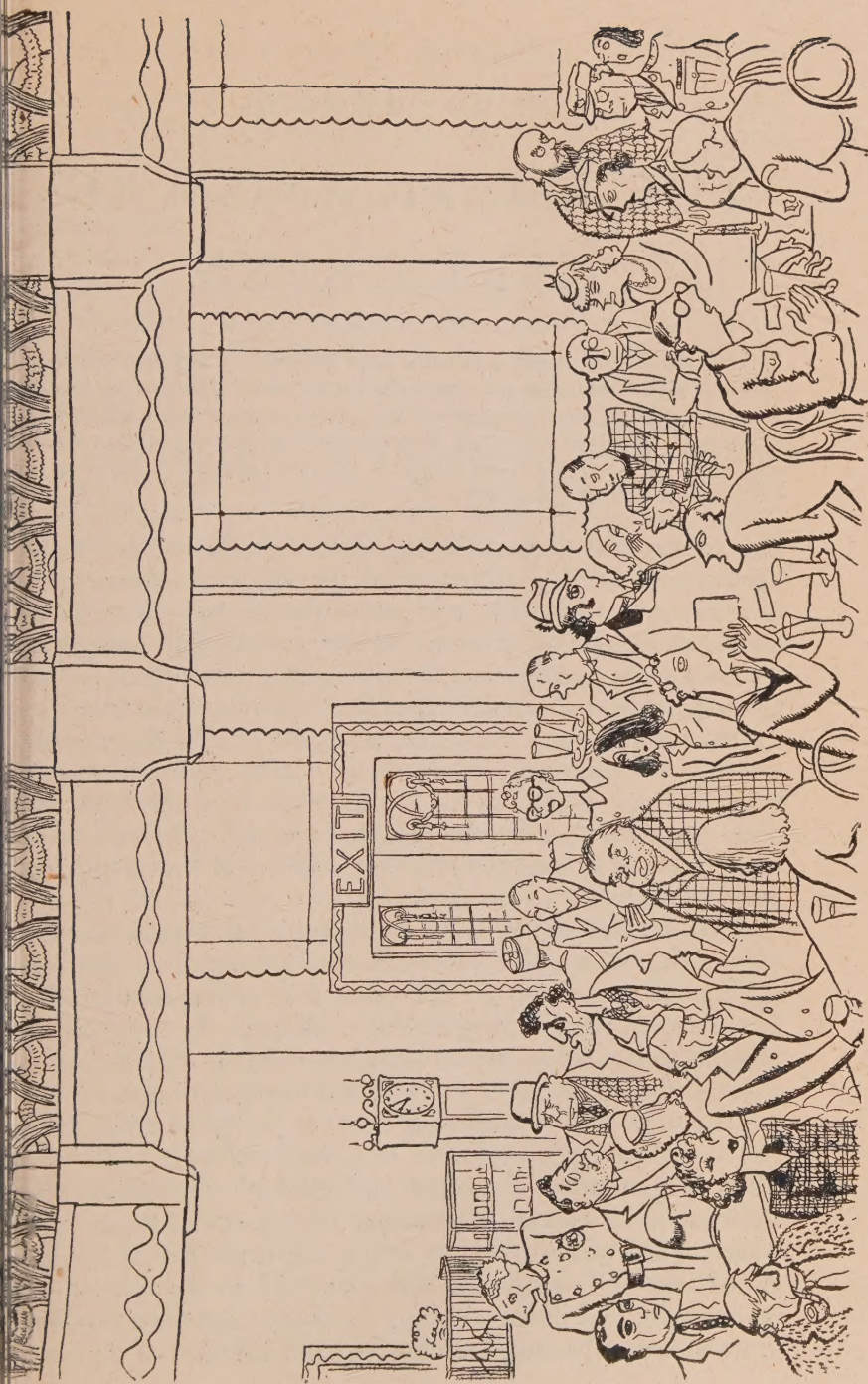
In the last few months several fascinating books have come out, none of which it has yet been possible to review in *Horizon*, and all of which contribute to the knowledge for which we are thirsting. There is Heard's *Training for the Life of the Spirit* (Cassell, 1s. 6d.), the first cheap textbook of the Californian mystics. There is Kenneth Walker's *Diagnosis of Man* (Cape, 12s. 6d.), in which a Harley Street surgeon brilliantly examines the claims of rival systems to be the final authority on life. Starting with the structure of the brain, from the physical end, he leads up through behaviourism, glands, psycho-analysis, and religion towards a position fairly close to Gerald Heard's in which he claims, in the yoga-mystique, the key to our evolution. This is an important book. Another is R. G. Hoskins's *The Glands and their Functions* (Kegan Paul, 18s. 6d.) which is an accurate and modest picture of the present state of glandular knowledge. Rivalling these books in the political field are Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* (Secker and Warburg, 20s.) with the most readable account yet written of Marx and Engels, and Professor Carr's *Conditions of Peace* (Macmillan, 12s. 6d.), which is the most vigorous, intelligent and forward-looking statement of the position of England before and after this war, and shows us the rôle to adopt if we are not to let Europe sink into becoming a Russian Province or an American museum.

It may be said that nothing is more tiresome than an artist with a half-baked knowledge of science—but if all writers read and do no more writing till the war is over, they will have had time to assimilate their knowledge! Labarthe's touching tribute to Sir William Bragg in the current *La France Libre* proves that we have one artist-scientist among us, and we hope that some forthcoming articles in *Horizon* will introduce others. And very helpful to us they should be. For as Montaigne wrote, Art c'est une absolue perfection, et comme divine, de savoir jouir loalement de son être.

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The Irish number of *Horizon* has been banned in Dublin, 'passages in Patrick Kavanagh's poem being considered to be grossly obscene'. *Horizon* would like to take this opportunity to thank our English and American readers for their extreme forbearance in letting this poem pass with favourable comment.





LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES—IV

OSBERT LANCASTER

D. S. SAVAGE

## THE AMERICANISM OF HART CRANE

*To settle this question, I may well repeat what an American lady once said to me, smiling to indicate how nice was the distinction she drew. 'Many of my countrymen,' she said, 'mix up the categories. They give to purely technical achievements, for example, that same awe-struck attention which in France you keep for the creations of the mind, of art, and of faith.'—Georges Duhamel: A Reply to my Critics, This Quarter, June 1931.*

It is strange that the peculiar significance of Hart Crane in the light of the modern poet's relationship to an industrial society has not been more generally recognized than it has. Crane is the unofficial laureate of modern America—although perhaps an America that is passing away. With important differences, he bore to the hustling, industrially expanding America of the 'twenties, a relationship in some ways very similar to that of Mayakovsky towards revolutionary Russia of the same period. Like the Russian, Crane embraced his life and time feverishly and with open arms; he, also, was homosexual and suffered from a deep disharmony of his personal life, lived wildly and wretchedly, and died eventually by his own hand.

When his *Collected Poems* were belatedly published in London for the first time a few years ago they fell curiously flat, considering his reputation on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet Crane is an impressive poet, and his work bears the unmistakable stamp of genius. It possesses a largeness of theme together with a depth of feeling and delicacy of verbal manipulation and a confident power of execution which cannot be waved aside. He is, however, exceedingly 'obscure' in a very real sense. And, with all its magnificence of rhetoric and subtlety of suggestion, his collected work appears fragmentary: the spars and wreckage of what we feel was intended to be a much larger design, an integrated whole. Towards the end he tended to write more and more wildly, and the overloading of his language resulted sometimes in a merely muddled clogging and inflation of the verse.



Poetically he must, judged by his own aspirations, be written down as a failure—if a glorious one—as he must, too, I suppose, in his life. But why, and how, was Hart Crane a failure? What was he trying to do and what can we learn from his aspirations and achievements?

Crane's family background was that of prosperous middle-class American industrialism. His father was a factory owner, and on both sides his family traditions were those of successful commercialism. He was a man of the cities, without palpable roots in any particular region or locality—and America is a vast country. In his adult life he moved aimlessly from place to place—New York, Cleveland, the Caribbean Isles, London, Paris, Mexico. His middle-class social background providing little opportunity or encouragement for the cultivation of artistic propensities, Crane early rejected it for the social vacuum, the underworld, inhabited by the writers and artists of the time. Both socially and regionally, therefore, Crane was rootless. He was particularly vulnerable to the impact of the impersonal world of modern experience. He worked in the dockyards as a riveter, he wrote advertising copy, he filled various petty positions in the literary-commercial hinterland, and finally, in the economic sense, he became frankly parasitic. It is because he was so completely at the mercy of his time that Crane is so interesting.

The accusation of 'Americanism' implied by the quotation from Georges Duhamel above would, of course, not be adequate or just in the case of Crane, and needs some qualification. Crane was a poet, necessarily concerned with the interior values. His peculiarity is, however, that parallel with this concern there ran an uncritical, open-armed acceptance of the outward technical achievements of American civilization. While detesting the uncouth *commercial* spirit that animated the American scene, and while feeling intensely his own isolation, as an artist, from the whole life of his time, its spirit of *industrialism* he accepted unquestioningly. 'The modern artist,' he once wrote, 'needs *gigantic assimilative capacities*,<sup>1</sup> emotion—and the greatest of *all*—vision. Potentially I feel myself quite fit to become a suitable Pindar for the dawn of the machine age, so-called.' These words are important. It was upon this cross that Crane allowed himself to be crucified.

<sup>1</sup>My italics

In his attitude towards the variegated phenomena of the contemporary scene. Crane provides an illuminating contrast as man and poet to his contemporary, T. S. Eliot. Eliot had published *The Waste Land* just as Crane was nearing the completion of one of his most important poems, *For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen*, a poem which attempted a poetic reconciliation of Helen as the 'symbol of the abstract sense of beauty' and the scientific temper of the modern world in the person of the poet, Faustus. But whereas Eliot turned, pessimistically or nostalgically, to the past, emphasizing the importance of tradition and of the historical sense, Crane looked optimistically forward, although not in a naively materialistic manner only, to a new, Utopian integration of life and culture.

When *The Waste Land* appeared, Crane wrote to a friend:

'There is no one writing in English who can command so much respect, to my mind, as Eliot. However, I take Eliot as a point of departure towards an almost complete reverse of direction. His pessimism is amply justified, in his own case. But I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb towards a more positive, or (if I must put it so in a sceptical age) ecstatic goal.'

As Mr. Philip Horton himself says in his biography, *Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet*:

'The difference in temper between the two men was clearly indicated by the nature of their leading symbols: for Eliot, the wasteland with its rubble of disintegrated values and desiccated spirits; for Crane, the bridge with its hope of spiritual harmony and order above and beyond the acceptance of contemporary chaos.'

That difference is illuminating in many respects—Crane, warring with an inward chaos, with a powerful but uneducated mind, projecting upon the world his need for an external order; and Eliot, precise and intelligent, with an extremely orderly and disciplined mind, looking outward and seeing disharmony and disintegration. Here, however, I want to single out only the main point of divergence between these so strongly contrasted poets of the post-Great-War years, their attitudes towards the framework of technical civilization in which they found themselves.

For Crane, modern progress was a reality. Seeing the modern world, as it were, moving ahead without a corresponding spiritual



or æsthetic advance, he regarded it as his poetic responsibility to catch up, to infuse external society, in the consciousness of man, with 'positive poetic content'. Eliot saw only an increased inward anarchy, a loosening of standards and decay of real values, accompanying the increased, hallucinatory, unreality of metropolitan life. Crane accepted the urban cyclorama joyously, ecstatically:

O harp and altar, of the fury fused,  
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)  
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,  
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,—

Against the traffic lights that skim thy swift  
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,  
Beading thy path—condense eternity:  
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

It is Brooklyn Bridge he is addressing in such terms. Contrast it with the familiar lines from *The Waste Land*:

Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. . . .

The differences apparent from these two fragments in the entire style and approach of the two poets are sufficiently outstanding to need no comment.

Crane's attitude towards modern civilization and its dynamic factor, the machine, was not solely one of simple-minded adoration. It is best expressed, perhaps, in the words of Mr. Horton, describing the philosophical opinions held by the small group of younger *avant-garde* writers of the 'twenties with which Crane was associated:

'Munson's own contribution seems to have been the insistence upon a positive creative attitude towards the machine, rather than the negative one held by the older group, which rejected or evaded it. Briefly, he held that the spiritual life of man and his culture had now become dependent on three

factors: man, nature, and the machine; that this had brought about an art of maladjustment rooted in a dangerous dualism; and that, finally, the only means of regaining an organic vital art lay in accepting the machine on the same level as nature, or, as he wrote, "to put positive and glowing spiritual content into Machinery." This was the dogma he had evolved and brought back with him from Dadaist Europe, and it was the section of his study suggesting ways and means of assimilating such new material as subject matter for poetry that Crane found so stimulating.'

It was under the stimulus of such conceptions that Crane began to write his *Faustus and Helen*, and indeed his whole work is conditioned by them. In Mr. Horton's words: 'Carried away by . . . the sweeping conception of a spiritual union between man, nature, and machine, both he and Munson seem to have had a Utopian vision of a new order of humanity about to arise.'

What Crane was really trying to do, as a poet, was to give an inward, spiritual significance to the material, outward conditions of twentieth-century industrial civilization. He wanted to take the whole complex structure of American mechanized society into his soul and to give it back again endowed with the spiritual significance and meaning of his own personality. Also, no doubt, he desired to escape from the burden of his personal existence by a process of objectification. The attempt was heroic—and pathetic. When the prevailing American optimism received a serious setback in the financial crisis of Crane's latter years, and most of Crane's literary associates turned for their salvation to some form of social criticism, Crane rejected them and pursued his path in isolation. His tenacious fidelity to the æsthetic path he had chosen seems to suggest that his choice of it was rooted deeply in the division of his own nature. With that I have not space to deal here. It is enough to say that we should be grateful that one poet undertook such a task as this, if only for the lesson he leaves for others, but mostly for his charting of a realm which might otherwise have remained unexplored.

Crane regarded it as the main task of modern poetry to 'absorb the machine, i.e., acclimatize it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons . . .' and most of his verse was written with this precept well to the foreground. However, his poems are never *about* machines and machinery. They are *about* (if the word may



be used at all) Crane's own experience. But into his own experience he tried to incorporate the whole of urban society and, in *The Bridge*, the history of the American nation. This last poem, his most ambitious effort which in his own mind he seems to have associated with the *Paradiso* of Dante, he described while writing it as 'A mystical synthesis of America' and 'Symbol of our constructive future, our unique identity, in which is also included our scientific hopes and achievements of the future.' I have said that Crane's poetry is obscure. It is as obscure as the poetry of the intensely isolated modern poet forced by his dislocation from society to cultivate deeply into his own private experience can well be. Yet the poetry he wanted to write, as the potentially great poet he knew himself to be, was public poetry. But the time of great public poetry is past. Crane was faced with two worlds, the inward private world of his own experience and the outward highly centralized world of mechanical civilization, and he wanted to reconcile the two. The bridge that he took as a symbol symbolized just that reconciliation. It was that attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable that set up such a terrific tension in Crane's mind and drove him to stimulants and debaucheries, the need for which became more and more violent as his life went on, culminating in his nightmarish last days and that final leap from the stern of the s.s. *Orizaba*.

The evidence of that strain is to be found internally in his poems, and in the story of his life as told by Mr. Horton. In its efforts to achieve a union between those two worlds, Crane's mind thrust itself out beyond the limits of human possibility. The mind recoils—just as Crane's own mind recoiled after each intoxicating spell of inspiration. The ecstasy he achieved was very nearly a delirium:

Let the same nameless gulf beleaguer us—  
 Alike suspended from atrocious sums  
 Built floor by floor on shafts of steel that grant  
 The plummet heart, like Absalom, no stream.

At times, as in certain of the *Voyages*, his poetry achieves a thickening vertiginous quality—a real biliousness. And that, indeed, is a measure of his success.

The question of 'obscurity' is a delicate one. Nearly all good

modern poets are, or have been, accused of 'obscurity', 'unintelligibility' and the like by those who like their verse to be genteel and slightly sedative. In Crane's case there is certainly some basis for this charge. When critics speak of 'obscurity', however, they usually mean that the poem in question fails in its presumed task of intellectual communication. Most poetry is in the nature of a comment upon experience. Crane's, by this test, fails completely. His poems are entities in which is caught and transfused a vast complexity of experience; they hang, as it were, plummet-wise over the abyss between the inner world of the poet or reader, and the outer world of extra-personal actuality which the poet strove so tenaciously to bring into poetic focus.

Crane wanted to be, felt himself to be potentially, a great poet — 'the greatest singer of my generation'. What are the distinguishing features of the 'greatness' which we recognize in certain 'great' poets of the past? In the first place, it is a social quality. It is the capacity, belonging to a certain time and place, to dominate, *as a poet*, the society of that period. The 'great' poet emerges as a social force, a focus of his society's strivings, yearnings, achievements and confusions. For the production of a great poet in this sense there must be an integration of personality and society, of the inner and outer worlds, which modern society, with its top-heavy mechanical superstructure and its network of extra-human relationships, cannot afford.

Crane and Munson were wrong in their attempt to 'accept the machine on the same level as nature . . . to put positive and glowing spiritual content into Machinery.' Their response to 'the firm entrenchment of machinery into our lives', which, said Crane, had produced 'a series of challenging new responsibilities for the poet', should have operated, not on the æsthetic, but on the social level. Crane accepted without question the centralized, topheavy industrial environment, tagging along behind the racketeers and financiers whose creation it all was. We cannot say he was 'wrong' to do so in any condemnatory sense. But it seems unlikely that any poet writing since his death will follow, in this respect, where Crane led. In choosing Faustus for a symbol in his first lengthy poem he was, perhaps, writing more profoundly than he knew.



# THE ART OF BEING FREE

I—ANTHONY GOLDSMITH

FLAUBERT IN 1870

IN the year 1870 the Second Empire was on the verge of dissolution. Napoleon III was ill and exhausted; disaffection was spreading, and an appearance of unity masked an inner decomposition. The Court was convinced that only a successful war could save the régime. Prussia was the obvious antagonist, because of her growing power and aggressive policy; a victory over Prussia would have the double advantage of silencing the Opposition and restoring to France the hegemony of Europe. For their part, the Prussians welcomed the opportunity, and Bismarck, conscious of his military superiority, set himself to inflame French opinion by a series of deliberate provocations. He was entirely successful. Crowds paraded the streets of Paris shouting 'A Berlin!' and 'Vive la guerre!'

From his retirement at Croisset, Flaubert viewed the impending conflict with gloom and disgust. He too was passing through an unhappy period. Several of his oldest friends had died within the year, including the irreplaceable Louis Bouilhet, his life-long comrade, critic and silent collaborator. Nor had he fully recovered from the failure of *L'Education Sentimentale*, which had evoked an astonishing outburst of vindictiveness from the critics. Even the members of his own circle preferred not to discuss the book in his presence, out of pity or for fear of compromising themselves. 'And not a soul,' he complained to George Sand, 'not a single soul takes my part.' These misfortunes aggravated his natural irritability. The war fever of the public infuriated him, and he professed an indignant pacifism. His attitude was not entirely intellectual in origin. In part it reflected the distaste of any creative writer for the destructive futility of war; but, as the violence of his feelings indicated, its main source was emotional. War to him meant the pre-eminence of the man of action, and consequently, the eclipse of the artist; it was an implied threat to his literary seclusion, to the only way of life which he now found tolerable. And the frenzy of the Paris

crowds corresponded all too closely with the romantic, unreasoning side of his own temperament, which he had always striven to subdue. His irony, his scepticism, his detachment—all the qualities which he prized—had been achieved only by a constant and laborious effort of self-conquest. The triumph of animal instinct over rationality which he was now witnessing seemed to menace, symbolically, his own intellectual defences.

At this crisis Flaubert looked to no political party for salvation. In his youth he had shared the fashionable radicalism of the Romantic period; but the failure of the revolution of 1848 had disillusioned him and he never forgave the masses for betraying his idealism. Yet he was equally repelled by the greed and corruption of the Right; so that now, with the artist's individualism, he favoured a sort of Utopian aristocracy, a 'government of mandarins'. The hysteria of Paris appeared to him to prove the hopelessness of conceding political influence to the ignorant and the half-educated. In a series of letters to George Sand he expressed his views with considerable force.

'I am disgusted and mortified,' he wrote, 'by the stupidity of my fellow-countrymen. The incurable savagery of the human race fills me with black depression. This enthusiasm, without an idea behind it, makes me long to die, so as to view it no longer.'

'Our friend the Frenchman wants to fight (1) because he considers himself challenged by Prussia, (2) because barbarism is the natural condition of man, (3) because there is a mystic element in war which carries away the masses.'

'There isn't even a pretext for the frightful slaughter which is about to begin. It's the love of fighting for fighting's sake. I mourn the broken bridges, the blocked tunnels—all the waste of human labour. . . .'

As the struggle drew nearer, he confessed to a 'bottomless despondency', which he attributed in part to his private sorrows, 'but the war,' he added, 'is largely to blame'. Even *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, which he had begun, failed to distract his mind. 'This, then, is the natural man!' he wrote, 'Theorise now, if you can! Try boasting of progress, enlightenment, the common sense of the masses, the gentleness of the French people! I can assure you that anyone attempting to talk peace here would be knocked on the head! Whatever the outcome, we have taken a long step backwards.'



With melancholy foresight he predicted a return to racial wars. 'The whole West against the whole East—why not?' Within a century, he prophesied, millions of men would be massacring one another, and he saw in great collective enterprises, like the Suez Canal, the vague prototypes of 'these monstrous, inconceivable conflicts.'

The immense and fatal error of literary people was to imagine that the rest of the world was like themselves. It was all the fault of universal suffrage. 'Do you believe that if France, instead of being governed, in the last resort, by the mob, were controlled by the mandarins, we should be where we are now?'

A brief visit to Paris served only to increase his disdain. 'What stupidity! What ignorance! What arrogance! . . . It may be that this nation deserves chastisement and I'm afraid it will get it. I find it impossible to read anything at all, still less to write. I spend my time, like everyone else, waiting for news. . . .'

Flaubert had not long to wait. Towards the end of August he learned of the rout of the French armies and the surrender of Napoleon III with his whole force at Sedan. A Republican Government of National Defence had immediately been formed in Paris and had proclaimed its determination to fight on. Flaubert could not help being deeply affected by these events. His ironic detachment was shaken; his patriotism was aroused, and he turned all his fury against the Prussians, who now threatened everything that he valued. He had little faith in the new Republic and none in the future; but it was still possible to make a romantic gesture. Although fifty years old and totally inexperienced, he joined the National Guard as a Lieutenant.

'Now we are at the bottom of the pit! I doubt if they will even grant us an ignominious peace! The Prussians want to destroy Paris! That's their dream!' . . .

'At Rouen we expect a visit from these gentry, and as I am a Company Lieutenant (as from last Sunday) I drill my men and go into Rouen to take lessons in the art of war.

'The deplorable thing is that opinion is divided, some being for resistance to the end and others for peace at any price. . . .

'I expect Paris to share the fate of Warsaw—and you get on my nerves with your enthusiasm for the Republic. At a time when we have been defeated by the purest positivism, how can you go on believing in phantoms? Whatever happens, those now

in power will be sacrificed later on, and the Republic will share their fate. Observe that I'm fighting for our poor Republic; but I don't believe in it. . . .'

'For my own part, I consider myself done for. My brain will never recover its balance. One can't write when one has lost one's self-respect. I ask only one favour—to die and be at peace. . . .'

He poured out his pessimism to Claudius Popelin, an old Parisian friend. A new world was coming where there would be no place for men of their sort.

'We shall be practical, militarist, mean, petty, poor and servile. Life in itself is so sad a thing that without ample relaxation it is unendurable. What will it be like now that it is to be so cold and bare? The Paris we love is gone for ever.'

Still Rouen waited for the arrival of the Prussians. News was scanty and unreliable; it came by balloon or carrier-pigeon. At every rumour hopes rose and fell. About the end of September a series of encouraging reports reached the town. Bazaine was holding out at Metz, while on the Loire, Gambetta, with astounding energy, had raised fresh forces and was marching to the relief of Paris. Flaubert's sensitive disposition made his emotions extreme, and his despondency gave way to elation.

There had been a complete change of sentiment, he wrote to Maxime Du Camp. Everyone realized that it was a fight to the death. The first battalion of the Rouen National Guard had set out the day before, the second was ready to start. The Municipal Council had voted a million francs for the purchase of rifles and guns. The peasants were enraged against the enemy. Within a fortnight the whole of France would rise. At Mantes a peasant had strangled a Prussian and torn him with his teeth. The French had had the advantage in all the recent skirmishes round Paris. The English papers were full of impudent lies. 'The armies of the Loire and of Lyon are not mythical. In the last twelve days 45,000 men have passed through Rouen. Guns are being made on a gigantic scale at Bourges and in Central France. If Bazaine can be relieved and communications with Germany cut, we are saved. . . . I have bought a soldier's knapsack and am ready for anything. . . . The Prussian army is a wonderful precision machine, but every machine can be thrown out of gear by the unexpected. . . . Our foe has science on his side; but sentiment, inspiration and despair are factors to be reckoned with. . . . Right must win



in the end and now we are in the right. . . . I may be mad, but something tells me that we shall come through.'

Flaubert was even able to resume work on *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. 'The Greeks of Pericles' time,' he wrote to George Sand, 'used to create works of art without knowing whether they would have anything to eat the next day. Let us be Greeks! However, I'll confess to you that I feel more like a barbarian. The blood of my ancestors, the Natchez or the Hurons, bubbles in my veins, and I have an earnest, idiotic, bestial desire to fight! Explain it, if you can. The idea of making peace now infuriates me, and I'd rather have Paris burned, like Moscow, than see the Prussians march into it. But we haven't reached that stage yet; I believe the tide is turning. I've read some soldiers' letters which are really perfect. A country where such things are written cannot be swallowed up. . . . Here, we have decided to march on Paris if the compatriots of Hegel lay siege to it. . . .'

Flaubert's spare time was entirely devoted to military activities. Once he addressed a spirited harangue to his troops, promising that he would run his sword through the first man who turned tail and enjoining them to shoot him should he himself attempt to flee. Meanwhile the days passed slowly. Inexplicably, the army of the Loire delayed. Bazaine remained beleaguered; the garrison of Paris made no sortie. Confusion reigned at Rouen. The Municipal Council refused to grant the officers of the Guard any disciplinary powers over their troops. Flaubert and his colleagues resigned their commissions as a protest. Worse still, the authorities decided to yield the city without a blow if the Prussians approached it. Flaubert began to lose heart. 'When I feel hope rising,' he wrote to George Sand, 'I try to push it back, and yet, in spite of everything, I can't help hoping a little, just a very little, at the bottom of my heart.'

Supposing they were to win? It was impossible; all the precedents of history were against it. When had the South ever beaten the North, or Catholics overcome Protestants? No—the Latin race was on its death-bed. France would follow Spain and Italy into a slavish decadence. As for the Prussians, they were unspeakable. 'Can one believe in progress and civilization in face of what is happening? What is the use of science, when this nation of scholars commits atrocities worthy of the Huns and worse than theirs, for they are methodical, cold-blooded, calculated,

excused neither by hunger nor passion? Why do they loathe us so much? Don't you feel yourself crushed by the hatred of forty million men? . . .

'There is a plentiful supply of ready-made phrases—"France will rise again! Never despair! It's a wholesome chastisement! We were certainly far too immoral!" Eternal humbug! If only I could escape to some country where there were no uniforms to see or drums to hear, where there was no talk of slaughter and one wasn't compelled to be a citizen! But the world is no longer habitable for the poor mandarins.'

Then came a disaster. Bazaine surrendered at Metz with 170,000 men, releasing a strong Prussian army to join the forces before Paris. Croisset was occupied by the Prussians; six of them were billeted on Flaubert and his mother, who had moved to Rouen. He was in an agony of despair and humiliation. His most regular correspondent at this time was his niece Caroline, who had fled to London. 'The time that isn't occupied,' he wrote to her, 'in running errands for the gallant Prussians (I had to walk for three hours yesterday to get them hay and straw) is spent in inquiring after one's friends or in weeping in one's corner. . . . And we don't know when it will be over! Poor Paris is still holding out! But in the end it will fall, and from that moment the whole of France will be plundered and destroyed. And then after that, what will happen? What a future! There will be plenty of sophists to prove to us that we shall be all the better for it and that "misfortune purifies". No! Misfortune breeds egotism and cruelty and stupidity—that was inevitable—it's a law of history. And what a mockery are the words "humanity, progress, civilization"! My poor child, if you knew what it was to hear the scraping of their sabres on the pavement and to have their horses snorting full in one's face! What shame! What shame!' The final ignominy was not long delayed. In January 1871 Paris surrendered. The capitulation, though long anticipated, was still shocking. Flaubert was beside himself with rage. 'It annoys me,' he wrote to Caroline, 'that Paris was not burned to the last house, leaving nothing but a great black space. France is so abased, so dishonoured, so humiliated, that I would like to see her vanish altogether. . . . I do not wear my Cross of Honour now, for the word "honour" no longer exists in France, and I am so seriously considering ceasing to be a Frenchman that I'm going



to ask Turgenev (as soon as I can write to him) what one has to do to become a Russian citizen.

'Your uncle Achille Flaubert wanted to throw himself from the bridge, and Raoul Duval had a sort of fit of insane frenzy. It's no good your reading the papers and imagining what invasion might be like; *you have no idea of it*. The proud in spirit are mortally wounded and, like Rachel, "will not be comforted".'

Flaubert's sufferings were gigantic, unparalleled. He sat up all night in bed groaning like a dying man. No private misfortune ever moved him so profoundly.

The Armistice was signed on January 28, 1871. As the winter passed the Prussians evacuated Normandy, and in the spring Flaubert plucked up his courage and returned to Croisset. The enemy had shown unusual moderation; they had stolen only a few pipes and a dressing-case. A box of papers, buried in the garden, was dug up intact.

Gradually Flaubert regained his mental balance. To his surprise and delight he found he was able to work again. Once more he could view events dispassionately. The Commune, which followed the Armistice, disturbed him a little—it was merely another *émeute*, a commonplace of French history. In his eyes, the Communards were ignorant and destructive; but even more contemptible were the French reactionaries, who were prepared to call in the German army to save their property from the workers of Paris. France, he concluded, had failed because the people insisted in believing in myths. They had supported Napoleon III because someone of that name had formerly led France to victory; they had attached magical significance to the word 'Republic', because a French Republic had once defeated the Germans at Valmy. In politics a return to scientific realism was necessary—but it must be a realism different from that of the Germans, who had perverted the achievements of science to military ends. The German attitude had the most dangerous implications for the future. Every nation, in self-defence, would be compelled to follow their example: 'toute l'Europe portera l'uniforme'.

## II—ANDRÉ GIDE

### IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS

(Reprinted from Figaro)

—I do not like interviewers. Nor all those people, whatever their profession may be who may have great and fertile ideas, but whose job is precisely not to say them. We writers, in order to reach the public, have no need of an interpretation which, very often, even with the best will in the world, grossly misrepresents our thoughts. This one, however, had found favour with me for some reason or another. I had welcomed him twice already (*Nouveaux Pretextes*). That was a long time ago; but it had created a precedent with which, knowing that a first concession commits us, he claimed to introduce himself. I hardly recognized him, and when he began telling me that he did not find me at all changed, I protested that I did not know if I ought not to take this polite untruth for a reproof.

—What reproach can you see in that? he said.

—The one that usually appears in this form: 'the war has taught him nothing.'

—Have you yourself not written in the past, that 'great events force everyone to be themselves'?

—I still believe this. However it often opens our eyes to faults and to vices; but usually to those of our fellowmen.

—But as you well know one forces oneself to find a remedy for them; and I think that you approve of this effort.

—Of course I do.

—And surely you consider it good for our recovery to suggest a common ideal to youth. It was certainly feeling the need of one.

I agreed that during the pre-war period, it was pulling in different directions.

—But, he then said (smiling apprehensively and calling me *cher maître*), have not you yourself helped by encouraging everyone to be themselves. And as I answered nothing.

—At any rate do you give our literature some part in the responsibility of our defeat?

—Allow me, I said by way of reply, to tell you a fable about the natives of the Congo. Perhaps you do not know it.



In order to cross a wide river a large number of people were massed on a boat. The boat being overloaded, foundered and began to sink. Some of those on board had to be landed. No one knew whom to choose. They first put on shore a fat business man, a shyster lawyer, a crooked financier, and the 'Madame' of a brothel. The boat remained stuck in the mud. Out now came the manager of a gambling-house, a white slave trafficker and even some honest people. Still the boat did not move off, but it got much lighter, and as soon as a missionary, as thin as a nail, came out it floated once more. The natives then began to cry out 'That is him. The Father of heaviness. Shame on him.'

—Were the others put back on board?

—The fable does not tell about that.

—Then it is absurd. Of what use is a boat if none can remain on board?

—There is one solution: we must float again.

—Yes, I understand you perfectly: people allege that some passengers whom they can name, compromise the journey. These they hope to get rid of to assure the buoyancy of the boat.

—One would only want to admit on board the pure.

—And it is precisely a question of purification. Naturally we are only speaking of literature, which is accused of many misdeeds; and of having enervated, discouraged and devitalized France.

—Admit that some of our pre-war writers, and amongst them the best, were often lacking in, shall I say, civic virtues.

—Did not they reflect the state of the country? Besides it is not those whom one blames. We often hear a whole epoch or a century covered with shame. Sometimes from Léon Daudet<sup>1</sup> it is 'the stupid nineteenth century'; sometimes Abel Bonnard makes a victim of the eighteenth century. The catholics reproach Diderot, Renan, even Montaigne, and the free-thinkers Bossuet. The old chorus is taken up again,

C'est la faute à Voltaire.

C'est la faute à Rousseau. . . .

Michelet and Hugo are spat on by Claudel.

—Lamartine's bristles rose at La Fontaine, discovering the most pernicious advice in his Fables.

<sup>1</sup> Léon Daudet of the Royalist *Action Française*, Abel Bonnard, Laval's Minister of Education.

—Do not interrupt me. . . . A recent anthology only praises<sup>1</sup> our sixteenth century at the expense of the sublime flights of our Romantics, and only includes a few isolated verses of theirs. This is ludicrous; and it would be only something to laugh at, if the books concerned were not in process of being effectively banned from our bookshops.

—Do you really believe that? . . .

—I believe that everything is possible, and nothing seems more naïve to me than what I hear so often said by those who were flying in disorder in front of the invasion: *cela ne s'est jamais un.*

—Jamais un? From certain aspects that ought to please you.

—Yes, as you say, from certain aspects. And if it were not so cruel it might even appear exciting. But so much novelty intimidates us. The mind and specially the heart have great difficulty in adapting themselves.

I remained silent for some time. The interviewer is one of those who do not understand silences. He went on,

—A few phrases of Montesquieu in the book just published by Grasset would seem to reassure us. Listen.

‘One of the things most noticeable in France is the extreme facility with which she has always recovered from her losses, her illnesses, her decrease of population, and the resources with which she has always supported and even overcome the internal vices of her various governments.

—Read on. If I remember right, it is about the variety of our country.

‘Perhaps the cause of this recovery lies in this very variety which has ensured that no evil has ever been able to entrench itself enough to take away the fruits of these natural advantages.

—These quotations were not so unknown that I had not already read them. But Grasset has done very well to republish them. They come from a wise man. That does not prevent this very variety being attacked. Today people wish to diminish it.

I got up. He then said

—Before leaving you, may I ask you a question. Are you working now?

—Yes for some time.

—May one know at what?

—First, at the preface on Goethe’s work for the theatre which

<sup>1</sup>Thierry-Maulnier’s (N.R.F. 1940).

the Pléiade are publishing: translated, alas, but carefully done. And I do not want to interpret Goethe in order to find in his work many ideas dear to myself: amongst others, those on individualism: for it is perhaps to him that I owe these ideas: at least he has encouraged them. Whatever he may be, Goethe remains for us the most perfect example of serviceable individualism. I do not mean slavish but serviceable, ready to serve. He was a man of duty: yes, of duty towards himself. His apparent and obvious egotism leads him to it and submits to it. Those who have accused him of this egotism seem to me to have misunderstood the austere demands that a healthy individualism often implies.

—Have you not said all this already?

—Let me repeat the words of a friend, also seventy years of age. He was being accused of repetition. 'At my age we must agree to repeat oneself, if we do not wish to say stupid things.'

—Is not your friend a relative of those imaginary pimps that Sainte-Beuve pretends to quote when he wants to show himself in a good light.

—You are very subtle.

—Shall I see you again.

—Perhaps. Wait until I send for you.

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I had not sent for him. He came back all the same, holding in his hand the number of *Figaro* in which his interview had appeared.

—The readers are not satisfied, he said. It is my fault: I should have questioned you better. Your thoughts, as you told me, can be found in your books. The rôle of an interviewer is to force intimacy: to make you speak about what you would not mention on your own account. To learn how you are keeping, how you are dressed, how you manage to feed yourself, if you are putting up with the restrictions; that is what the public expects me to tell them and to make you talk about.

I had not the heart to get angry with such a worthy man.

—If it is only a question of that, I told him, I will be able to satisfy you a little. First reassure your readers. Tell them that there is certainly no lack of people more needy and more worried



than myself. It is true I am wearing old clothes as I am unable, as you are, to get any new ones for myself. What you see on my back have been relined three times, and I have had the elbows patched; many people are in the same boat. For food, there are certainly very few meals on top of which I would not willingly accept a beefsteak with fried potatoes, but I am glad to hear that the other districts are better provisioned than ours. I also know that some have much less, and that even in the most favoured, a number of people are shorter than I am. As a matter of fact, I am very glad not to eat too much meat and have never felt in better health. I do not miss coffee as I had not been in the habit of drinking it. The shortage from which I suffer the most is, I admit, that of tobacco, having formed the cowardly habit of smoking while at work. This is to say that I can only work when I am smoking. At the beginning, I thought, what a good chance to break this habit. . . . This was without reckoning on the solicitude of several friends who, by not smoking themselves, kindly facilitate my vice when it is a question of action. I am stubborn and persevering but prone to temptations.

—Giving in to them is what is nowadays called: saying yes to life.

—I know, I know, and am not caught by this sophism. To act is not only to resist; and it is not always by yes that man asserts himself. Now are you satisfied?

—Yes, that is something which will interest the public.

—And now let us talk about serious matters.

—Ah! I wanted to tell you. One of your phrases has upset me. That in which you say that I have not understood your silences. Yes: after you had used the word 'heart'. You were mistaken. I was only surprised by the distinction that you seemed to make or allow between heart and mind. I thought that it was the same thing for you and remembered an incident in Baudelaire; it happens in *Du vin et du Haschisch*. Having written 'heart' Baudelaire corrects himself and adds immediately 'or rather the brain of man'. I did not think that, like Valéry, you disapproved of vague words.

—No: Heart, mind . . . we know very well what we mean by them: even if it is not easy to define them. The outlines alone are indefinite and one often overlaps the other. Certain emotions encroach on the spiritual and certain ideas are affected.

It is possible that in the brain we have no emotions at all and that from it depend our feelings and our passions. But all the same this flow of blood to the brain comes from the heart, and we make no mistake about certain appeals from the brain which make our heart beat much faster. Let us admit this, I beg of you, otherwise we shall not know what we are about. It is just the same for the word 'mind', for the word 'God', for all these words of heavy tonnage which lend themselves, it is true, to confusion; but it is for this very reason that they are useful. Certainly the word 'Country', for example, does not include the same landscapes for the peasant from the north of France as for the peasant from the south; it is not understood in the same way by the agriculturist as by the intellectual; by the poor man as by the shareholder. But it is a rallying-cry. And when we hear that 'the Country is in danger' the important thing is for us to get up and unite to defend it; and what does it matter if what we are defending should be for the peasant, the farms; for the intellectual, culture; for the industrialist, industry; and even for the shareholder, his shares. The word 'Country' comprises all that; it is understood at the same time by the mind and by the heart. I would like to be able to say the same for the word 'love', the imprecise uses of which are responsible for the most serious consequences. What is there in common between the New Testament love of one's neighbour, which implies the gift of oneself, and the unbridled sexual appetite, the need to possess which often leads to crime. Are you not embarrassed already by hearing some of our romantics calling their beloved, mother, daughter, sister, in turn.

—Our psychologists are there to discriminate between them.

—Then they are accused of splitting hairs. But, I admit, Nature herself often muddles everything up. It provides changes from one love to another, misunderstandings, interruptions. Sometimes physical desire reaches out to something worse and the aspiration which began as spiritual becomes corrupted.

—Perhaps you mean completes itself.

—It is true that love can absorb both the body and the mind at the same time. But often one remains indebted to the other. Then horrible tragedies occur; for in this case the other person is frustrated. . . . But I am letting myself be carried away.

—I am here to listen to you.

—Yes. But I do not wish to say too much. Our literature is already excessively concerned with these matters, and recently Jean Schlumberger rightly deplored the place that love held in it. His mistake, in my opinion, was to incriminate Racine in this. It is even not really correct to say that love is the mainspring of almost all his tragedies. At least love is nearly always balanced by higher interests. Let him think of Titus:

Je sens bien que sans vous je ne saurais plus vivre,  
Mais il ne s'agit plus de vivre, il faut régner.

—And what would de Musset say about the plays of Marivaux? In them love is master and is his only concern. If one is to believe a number of our authors, and not the most inconsiderable of them at that, it would seem to be the whole aim of man that all value leads up to it, ends with it, wears itself out with it; that nothing is worth attention or interest except love, and that as far as the world goes there are only mistresses and lovers to consider. If only this love made us better, as sometimes happens; if it pushed man towards heroism, woman towards virtue, or both to some fruition of which, in isolation, they had been incapable and without the wakening of love they would never have caught a glimpse . . . But for one *Princesse de Clèves* there are numberless *Manon Lescauts*.

—Take care. You are yourself beginning to disapprove and to censure.

—No: I admire *Manon Lescaut*; but I would like such works to serve as warnings. It is an affected book, written in a natural manner. It is tempting to overrate its importance; but it is great nevertheless.

—Don't you think that France alone could have produced this masterpiece?

—Masterpiece! You are going a bit too far. That France alone could have produced it, I agree, but with some sadness. In any case, I doubt, with reference to *Manon*, whether any other country except France could provide such an abundant and deplorable kind of literature. To be exact: it is not the depiction of bad habits, places of ill-fame which I mean. It is the feebleness. Sartre, today, gives us, with exceptional skill, a picture of the despicable; he is never flabby. For this I give him great credit. But what a relief to dip again into *Moby Dick* or into *Robinson Crusoe*! Such



vile works have, alas! no equivalents in our literature . . . at any rate not up to the present day.

—You could still have mentioned *Treasure Island* by Stevenson and several novels of Conrad. But you say up to the present day. Do you mean that?

—Yes, the works of Giono, Malraux, Saint-Exupéry, Montherlant, their aims and their value give me great hope of getting out of the often muddy rut in which our literature was stuck; of getting up from those 'armchairs as deep as tombs'. Dignity, nobility of heart, heroism, find an echo, I believe, among the young people of today.

—But excuse me . . . have you not written that with fine feelings one writes bad literature?

—I have often been accused of this phrase without its being understood, and the most often by those who quoted it wrongly, forgetting that I had all the same written *La Porte Etroite*. He alleges (they said of me) that in art it is always evil which triumphs; as if we had not seen the opposite in *Le Ble qui lève* and *Les Roquevillard*. That good intentions cannot take the place of genius is about what I had meant to say. The hell of literature (I mean bad literature) is paved with them. These books, which are stupidly edifying, are not only mediocre: they discredit what they praise.

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I was at work when he came in.

—Still at the Preface to Goethe's plays? he asked.

—I am afraid that it may be disappointing, I told him. Since I was twenty years old I have been brought up on Goethe; but to do this work really well I need books which I can only find in Paris. André Billy rightly complained of the poverty of our provincial bookshops. For lack of written information, I shall have to stick to generalities and to recollections of things I have read. After all, perhaps it is as well; in the same way, the novelist should not work directly from facts. The memory clarifies them, only retaining the essentials. At least this is what I tell myself so as not to lose confidence, knowing, on the other hand, the value of their own unique peculiarity. But on this occasion, as always, one has to do the best one can. The same difficulty worries me far more in finishing off the anthology which I have

now been writing for a long time; for this the texts themselves are essential.

—Other anthologies have recently appeared and the public taste for them has justified your prediction when, in reply to an inquiry, you said that a considerable new lyric movement might be expected in France. Collections of poems are appearing everywhere, and never has the public shown itself so eager or greedy for poetry.

—It would seem as if it were taking refuge in it.

—Have not these anthologies by Thierry-Maulnier, Marcel Arland and Jean Prevost induced you to give up your own?

—Mine will be very different from theirs, and correspond to other needs. As intelligent as the three you mention may be (and I have seen only the first two), they do not really satisfy me. Like those which have preceded them, they seem to have taken special pains to justify the reputation we have abroad: where you look for music you find eloquence and formal reasoning. Thierry-Maulnier shows an excessively personal taste which provides its great interest: it is a confession of faith. In it he reveals a terrible fervour and partisan ferocity: by opposition he asserts himself. He overpraises, if I may say so, all those he likes, but to criticize he contents himself with paltry and fallacious arguments. And too often I feel that these reasons, although he denies it, are provided by politics (and I give a very wide meaning to this word), just as religion might provide them for others. With poetry, it is important to forget these things; the reader must approach it with a relaxed mind; it is for this reason that poetry is so beneficial today.

—May we know the reasons which guide your choice in the anthology you are preparing?

—I intend to set them out in a preface. But they are not, in the meaning of the word, 'reasons'. I shall try, at whatever cost, not to show my own taste too much, and I shall not allow myself to give into one of those excessive and temporary reactions such as makes Thierry-Maulnier overlook *Chénier*, *Moreás* and *Verlaine*, or boost *Maynard* 'to a lyrical height that *Lamartine* and *Hugo* do not aspire to reach', and belittle *Hugo* for the benefit of *Nerval*. Certainly it was important to revalue *Maurice Scève* and *Gérard de Nerval*, who have been for so long unjustly despised. But from the way in which things are going, the great

lyricist Hugo, the greatest in our Pantheon, is today becoming unrecognized. The few poems of his which are quoted in good books and in recent anthologies are only sufficient to give us a glimpse of his inexhaustible genius. 'Only verbal genius' we are told. What an absurdity! And what foolishness to talk about his 'stupidity'. It is in virtue of his intelligence that he never allows thought to obstruct or spoil his verses. He submits everything, even his emotion, which I do not always find very sincere, to the completeness of his verse; as if he were himself carrying out Diderot's paradox about the actor; 'the important thing for him is not to be moved himself but to move others.' To be precise: his verses are only inspired by his emotion in so far as they amplify and do not inflate it. But what verses! It might be said that Hugo only feels and thinks in terms of them. The rhymes like wild birds come up from out of the horizon to get hold of pieces of food which he holds out to them, just as one sees a flight of sparrows or pigeons crowding around a tamer in public gardens. I agree that in some of his long poems whole sections fall into bombast and disastrous nonsense; but even then you can find jewels amongst the wreckage. It is a pleasure to look for them there and I have never done so without being rewarded. I agree that when this giant wishes to 'be a man' (in the sense that Pascal said 'be an angel or be an animal') and to show himself simply as a lover, father or grandfather, he is then often less good. And it is your affair if you prefer the human to the monumental. But should not we be able to take people for what they are without exacting from them what we can so well find elsewhere; giants as giants, dwarfs as dwarfs and Hugo's detractors as fools? The other day we were talking about faults in French made by great authors: with Hugo, you will never find the slightest inaccuracy of diction, grammatical error, faulty syntax, feebleness of vocabulary or awkwardness. None of the difficulties of our versification or of our language pull him up or worry him; he soars over every obstacle and uses principle as a spring-board. But why do you allow me to talk for so long?

—I am listening to you. But if you have finished your praise, dare I inquire why, when asked once who was our greatest poet you replied: 'Hugo, alas!'

—I would say it again. However great my admiration. I am all at ease with his pathos, because I feel that it is always artificial,



making no sense, only serving as a pretext for making verse. Yes, this thought which is always floating about at the mercy of the verse makes me long for more discipline and integrity. Of course I am only now speaking of Hugo the lyricist, willingly leaving on one side his novels, and especially his dramas, where the flagrant artificiality no longer imposes itself on us. On the other hand, let us especially single out his *Choses Vues* (and all his works which could be classified under this heading) in which he reveals himself as an excellent reporter. Too often

‘Ses yeux plongent plus loin que le monde réel’

but whenever he wishes he knows very well how to look at and to depict the real world admirably. Let us add that he excels in abuse.

—If he were to come back to earth, Hugo would surely be very much surprised to see the enormous volume of his work balanced today by the small output of Baudelaire, and the large number of our best minds abroad as well as in France, siding with the latter.

—I will do the same myself, but only when I have already given the great Hugo a sweeping bow.

He took these last words for a hint and got up to take his leave.

—Before letting you go, I said to him, may I ask one question: do you know the poems of Lil Boel?

—Isn't that the young woman who is now reciting her ballads in a small music-hall near the Place d'Italie? They say that all Paris is going to hear her. I have read nothing of hers except the introductory poem from her repertory which the *Figaro* recently quoted.

—What do you think of it?

He grimaced (by which I could instantly tell that he meant nothing by it, but wished to give the appearance of knowing all about it) and said,

—It seemed to me as if there were in it some things which were not so bad.

—Not so bad! I am telling you that this poem is excellent and let us hope we will find some as remarkable as the following in the book *Fosse Commune* which is promised us,

‘Maman souffrait que j'soye maladive  
que j'parlais pas et jouais jamais,

elle d'vinait qu'ça m'rendait pensive  
et m'donnait des chagrins secrets

J'cherchais, dans les fêt's de famille,  
la tristess', du jour qui suivrait,  
j'cherchais l'caillou dans les lentilles,  
et les araignées dans l'rosier

J'ai fait ça sur un grand échelle  
tout' ma vie et c'est d'venu d'la déformation professionnelle  
C'est trop tard, j'm'en corrig'rai pas. . . '

—I ought to tell you that I have a horror of the trivial.

—Not more than I have, certainly if they were only slightly less good, these verses would be unbearable to me. But I can certainly say that apart from those of Aragon which are of quite a different kind, I have read nothing for a long time which seems to me better—or even as good—which has touched me as much.

I am not surprised that Fargue likes them: he understands them: and if you do not believe me you can believe him. Poems of this 'genre' as you call it are usually only pure affectation; but these give out a sound which does not deceive.

—Are you not horrified by this systematic elision of e mute?

—This elision is natural and is in keeping with our language. Artifice, on the contrary, consists in giving an equal metrical value to the unaccented sounds of our language and to the full syllables.

—A trick which our best poets agreed to recognize by their own exquisite use of it.

—Which astonishes foreigners, for this trick is unique in our language, and they have considerable trouble in accustoming their ear to it. What seems more serious to me is that it tends to keep the people who read everyday prose more and more apart from those who enjoy classical poetry. Our best poets are only understood by a very small number of people.

—You think that this is a pity. A pity for the people or for the poets? Do you wish them to look for a wider audience today?

—To our next meeting! I will try to answer you.

★

★

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—Do you know how many there are? he asked, on his next visit.

—Who are you talking about?

—French poets at the present time. André Billy, after a recent

estimate published by Philippe Chabaneix in *Cahiers de la Jeune France*, was amazed to find about a hundred. But Henri de Lescoët intends to provide him with a more complete list which accounts for exactly two hundred known living poets.

—Well-known ones?

—That is to say: known to him.

—Good heavens! Two hundred, did you say? I did not expect as many as that.

—If you do not call that a renaissance. . . .

—Putting on one side about twenty of those we could name, who are part of the passing generation ready to hand over their position, and the dozen or so at least of the new ones who already claim our attention, I think that the majority of real poets in this impressive number are under thirty years of age.

—I certainly hope so. They are the forces of the future about which Rimbaud talks.

—And I suggest that if one had drawn up a similar list in about 1900, this list, although certainly less numerous, would not have included either Claudel or Péguy, who had not at that time given us any real poems, or perhaps even Valéry, who, after a few verses in his youth, had for a long period deliberately stopped writing. At that time, however, all three had reached or passed the age of thirty!

—What conclusion do you draw from this?

—Only this: that the most important poet already alive, who will be most talked about and listened to tomorrow, the worthy link of a great tradition, is perhaps not even mentioned on this list as he is still hidden in the shadows where fate is keeping him in reserve. Patience is a great and rare virtue, to know how to wait and to mature, to correct oneself, regain control and, as the Apostle says, aspire to perfection. But the taste for perfection is going astray. It is a pity, for it was a real French quality.

He then made rather a shrewd remark which, I admit, surprised me, coming from him.

—In our time the taste for perfection seems to show itself in the instruments and machines where it is assessed by the scale of output and of use. In the realm of the arts, it is getting quite out of control.

—Whether in painting or poetry, for everything that is personal, both the artist and the public are satisfied with sketchy



and often hastily made assertions. Sometimes even a taste for the formless can be felt in them. There is no longer any question of a masterpiece: the word raises a smile. There is no longer any question of continuance; everyone gambles on the moment.

—Is it not because tomorrow seems too uncertain for us?

—The very masters chosen by these young people are those whose genius overflows in great waves. It is the absence of barriers which attracts the disciple: and for this there is a certain scorn for compulsion and for effort. Whenever they let themselves go, they are pleased to believe that it is genius.

I remember having once written that a great deal of talent is necessary to make a little genius bearable.

—I do not see to whom you are referring.

—Nor do I.

And as I said no more, he went on:

—We have often been blamed for this concern for perfection, which you say is typically French, by other nations who are less cultured and by people who are more spontaneous, more naïve. In it they see the proof of arrested growth, of a return to the past; for they argue that one only tries to perfect something which has ceased to grow, and what is evolving cannot solidify in order to become perfect.

—Let us rather say: whatever hardens to perfect itself gives up its own development. Yes: I know all about that, and can distinguish even through the discordant noises of young poets singing out of tune, an effort towards new harmonies which are not yet recognized as such. There is no renaissance which does not first of all burst its bonds. Yesterday's perfection is in the way of tomorrow's growth. . . . If I thought it over perhaps I would find some less worn images. I could play on the two meanings of the word Finish.

—You like to play on words.

—Certainly I do; also to let them play. It is by playing with them that words teach us. But you are interrupting me when I wanted to draw your attention to . . . oh, yes: it is about that line of André Chenier:

*Sur les pensées nouveaux formons des vers antiques*

I think that, in spite of this precept, no new thought enters into art in borrowed clothes. The height of perfection is reached

only when the novelty of the form exactly corresponds to the novelty of the content. Now we are only too inclined, in this case, to remain insensitive both to one and to the other; while a form that we can recognize will appear perfect, even when this old vessel, in regard to the new wine it contains, can no longer be suitable. Something entirely new, an unusual form, has only too often been rejected as valueless, both in poetry, music and painting; even this form is demanded by the novelty of its content, from which it is in any case inseparable and with which it is confused. For it is an absurd old dispute which arises when we deal separately with form and content; actually they are, or should be the same thing. The renaissance of poetry will be either formal or informal. Each genuine artist creates his own form just in the same way as a mollusc secretes his shell from his own body. May Apollo keep our Parnassus from the Hermit Crabs of Art.

He then, apprehensively, drew my attention to the fact that the form of the sonnet had no more been invented by Shakespeare than by Ronsard, Michelangelo, or Petrarch, and that for a long time after them a large number of poets, the greatest and the best in various countries, had let their genius flow into this conventional mould. His observation was so pertinent that my thought also followed in this direction. It instantly occurred to me that if only the creators of new forms were given a place in the history of art, it was all up with culture; that this very word implied a continuity and consequently disciples, imitators, followers who completed the chain: in one word, 'tradition'. I felt nonplussed and, fearing to appear so, excused myself on the grounds of a sudden fatigue.

After he had left me, I remained for a long time deep in thought. Yes, returning to our arguments and to what I had said about the need for maturing, I thought for a long time about those young people who are at the moment keeping their peace and letting their thoughts and their faculties slowly gather strength in isolation and silence. And I felt a prayer flow from my heart to my lips; an uncertain and wavering payer: 'Have patience, values of the France of the future, your hour will come'; an eager prayer for you who will speak out when 'perhaps' I shall no longer be there to listen to you. I shall not be able to hear you any more, but it is you I am waiting for.

*(To be concluded)*

JOHN TONGE

## SCOTTISH PAINTINGS

ABOVE all, the Scottish painters have excelled by their brushwork and colour. 'A sturdy rawboned Caledonian picture', once complained a critic of John Runciman, 'coloured with brick-dust, charcoal and Scotch snuff'. But against this, Sir James Cawsets John Brown's opinion that 'with regard to the truth, the harmony, the richness and the gravity of colouring—in the style, in short, which is the peculiar characteristic of the ancient Venetian, and the direct contrast of the modern English school, Runciman was unrivalled'. What was true of the Scottish Georgians applies also to the Glasgow Group and to the young men of today. While Legros confirmed Englishmen in their habit of making drawings, colouring them and calling the results paintings—a habit broken only by bold experimenters—the painter of merely average ability trained in the schools of Edinburgh and Glasgow handles colour with confidence and ease, drawing in paint, not 'from the shadows' but in the manner of a Renoir. All too often, however, the Scot's merit has stopped there. While the Scottish Academy, much more representative of a nation's art than Burlington House has ever been, shows the work of many admirable painterly painters, men who have nothing to learn about putting pigment on canvas, only a handful of them, as anywhere, show a critical awareness of the times and make a contribution, however slight, to the movements that have produced Picasso and Max Ernst. It is pleasant, therefore, to see in London<sup>1</sup> the work of young and youngish Scottish painters who, brought up in the wake of Peploe, Hunter, Cadell and J. D. Fergusson, apply themselves to new problems and in their several ways express a fresh sensibility.

The record of Scottish art abounds in surprises. Andrew Goddes, who painted more enduring portraits than any other British artist of his day; William MacTaggart, an impressionist before Monet; Charles Rennie Macintosh, the pioneer of twentieth-century architecture. It is a story, too, of brilliant

<sup>1</sup> 'Six Scottish Painters.' The Lefèvre Gallery. May 1st to 30th.



individuals rather than of groups, as the exhibition of six Scottish Painters emphasizes. MacBryde, Maxwell and Baird, for example, working apart, pursue very different aims; there is no Scottish Group, no Unit One, or Euston Road. Yet they have certain things in common, their pictures hang together without jostling each other, and they have the excellent quality of paint for which the Trustees Academy and the Glasgow School are famed. Even Edward Baird, who with his tighter handling and austere palette recalls Mantegna rather than the Frenchmen working *à premier coup*, takes—and holds—his place among them. A brilliant draughtsman and a superb craftsman, Baird is a sympathetic and penetrating portraitist, and paints the coast and moors of Angus with a subtle stylization. There is little atmospheric colour in his landscapes, but invariably an admirable design and a harmonious colour scheme. He is an interesting bridge between the traditional draughtsmanship of Bone and the modern movement.

William Gillies most clearly continues the work of the Peploe generation, post-impressionists of whom it has been said: 'Not what was said mattered to them, but how it was said. Description and criticism of life they left to others, and concentrated upon the problems of picture-making.' Like Peploe, Hunter and Cadell, his aim is to delight, to reduce to order an ardent lyrical response to the beauties of his native landscape or to the play of light on a plate of peaches. Without Peploe's assured draughtsmanship and his ruthless self-criticism, he is an uneven painter, but capable—now he has risen above a host of influences, ranging from Munch to Matisse—of work of very real distinction in oil and water-colour; there is great charm, too, in his drawings of woodlands and harbours.

While Gillies in his subject-matter is as conventional as his predecessors, John Maxwell bravely faces up to Freud and the *Kulturbolshevists*. For a time, it appeared that the surrealists might fairly claim him, but the surrealists of Paris rather than Strasburg. Like so many Scots, two countries compete for his affection, his own and France; and his dream-world is that of Redon and Chagall. As a colourist, he probably holds his own with any other British painter of his years, as can be seen in his 'Flowers in a Landscape' and 'The Fallen Vase'. His pictures are relatively few, and exciting; the Edinburgh that for all its air of a capital was

startled by Peploe's paper roses and the Greek-like brilliance of his Hebridean landscapes, is only slowly accustoming itself to the poetry of Maxwell's circuses and floral processions.

But William Johnstone more than any other has revolutionized the content of modern Scottish painting. A restless Celt, torn between Los Angeles and the valley of the Tweed, he has brought home exciting travellers' tales, of expressionism, of cubism and surrealism. He has done as much as anyone to revolutionize art-teaching in British schools, and in his *Creative Art in England* and other writings has shown a catholic understanding of abstract and non-representational painting and sculpture. Ahead of most of his Scottish contemporaries, he appreciated the importance of the surrealist challenge. 'The rationalist society that ignores religion, the myth, folklore, is doomed,' he wrote; but when exhibiting in the company of the surrealists, he has labelled himself 'Independent'. Some of his paintings at the Lefèvre Gallery have been seen in London before; but a 'Landscape in Wartime' is a new example of his individual and subjective treatment of landscape, and heads of 'Hugh MacDiarmid' and the artist's kinsman Francis George Scott—the composer, imaged in a Borderland fantasia—give a good notion of his high-pressured boldly imaginative portraiture. In Edinburgh he learned to paint; in Paris he became an artist, in a time of experiment and dispute.

Colquhoun and MacBryde, both products of the Glasgow College and much influenced by each other, are the youngest of the six Scottish painters, and the only two at present working, as they say, 'furth of Scotland'. Sharing the experiences of English artists during the past two years, it is not surprising that they have found subjects in some of the same places and to some extent shared the same approach: but their affinities with, say, Rutherfurd or Moore in their paintings of tree-forms and ruined buildings are only superficial. Colquhoun's 'Kensington Gardens' develops naturally from his early nervously precise Wyndham Lewis-like drawings; in MacBryde's scenes of bombed London one welcomes the tactile beauty of the Glasgow Schoolman's impasto, the classical construction, and excellent sense of volume. Unfortunately, neither shows a portrait. The standard of Scottish portraiture is high (the photographers, too, are not the fellow-countrymen of David Octavius Hill for nothing) and

Colquhoun's and MacBryde's portraits are very fine indeed; but their landscapes and pictures of blitz havoc give their measure as highly original young artists of promise. It is a pleasure to see in MacBryde's 'Ave Maria Lane', a scene of havoc that is painted not scratched, that is as modern in feeling as you choose and yet never strains the medium. Colquhoun's 'Tomato Plants' is a work of great strength and loveliness.

Beyond the Tweed, other young artists are developing independent of English influence: even the war has not turned their eyes from Paris, and the influx of Frenchmen, Poles, Norwegians and other allies has heightened their awareness that they are Celts, with a tradition, albeit interrupted, of their own. Scottish art has always flourished independent of London. While Ramsay was a Court painter, Raeburn was scarcely known in the South during his lifetime; the romantic naturalism of the nineteenth-century painters brought them into the ambit of the Barbizon School and the Hague; there was no Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the North. Dyce, who by some is regarded as the forerunner of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, was the most Anglicized Scot of his generation and a pillar of the Church of England—a fact not without significance, when one considers the young English painters' mounting interest in the Pre-Raphaelites and their predecessors. In England, the abstract movement has ended in the perfectionism of the constructivists, or been diverted into decoration; while the romantics would appear to be forsaking surrealism for the traditionalism of Blake, Palmer and the Pre-Raphaelites—a graphic rather than a plastic tradition. For the Scot, the line of development must be rather different. There has been virtually no religious painting in Scotland, although there has been a wilderness of Bible illustrators. David Scott, the most imaginative of the mid-nineteenth-century Scottish painters, held the Nazarene Movement up to scorn and boldly desiderated a modern mythology. Art and religion, together touching the core of the unseen, must ever act and react on each other, and what forms the Scottish Celt's religious experience is to take, what art his highly developed plastic sense is to produce are conjectural. Here in London, however, are works that point to interesting possibilities.





MONTREAL, by EDWARD BAILEY



The Filling of the Ark. Marc Chagall. 1915.



Ave Maria Lane, 1941, by ROBERT MACBRYDE





C. E. M. JOAD

# THE FACE OF ENGLAND:

HOW IT IS RAVAGED AND HOW IT  
MAY BE PRESERVED

THE ravages, of course, began long before the war. The invention of the internal-combustion engine may be regarded with justice as the greatest single disaster in the history of mankind. Not only has it destroyed the security of England and made wholesale death and mutilation familiar things; it has also destroyed the beauty of England, killed quiet, and, with quiet, dignity. Take, for example, the case of Sussex. Who would have thought, as we wandered years ago through the Weald in spring and saw that incredible profusion of primroses and wild daffodils, or in summer through the empty spaces of the high downs, that these things upon which we had been nourished in childhood and had grown to rely upon for manhood, turning to them again and again for rest and refreshment of the spirit, would in our time be destroyed, dying before we ourselves should die? Yet so it is. First, the railways scattered their scurf of 'resorts' along the coast and accumulated little ganglions of vulgarity around their stations, as an alien body thrust into the flesh accumulates a zone of inflamed tissue around its place of entry; but the county as a whole remained inviolate. Then came the cars. The south and south-east of England were brought within the range of daily accessibility from the centre, with the result that London burst like a bomb and scattered its debris far and wide over the faces of Surrey and Kent, and presently over that of Sussex. With the coming of the car the peace of the county was broken, its traditions destroyed, its power to refresh and invigorate the spirit, a power which depended in part upon its emptiness and its peace, impaired. Its inhabitants bought gramophones and grew basely rich; its roads became maelstroms of traffic along which cars hurled their inert occupants to the coast, its valleys came out in a rash of angry pink; every hilltop had its villa, every village its multiple store, while the sacred peace of the downs was broken by the snorts of motor-bicycles and the hoots of straining cars. If the horde of invaders had derived benefit from

their defilements, the case though bad would have been bearable. In fact, however, the majority of those who rifled beauty were unaware of what they did. Walking, just before the war, on Amberley Down, I came upon a small Austin perched upon its highest point, outraging the sight of all beholders. I approached intending to draw the attention of the occupants to the beneficent but unobserved law which forbids a car to park itself more than fifteen yards from the highway (see the Road Traffic Act 1930). Within it sat a young man and his girl. Their backs were to the view, their windows shut. Were they engaged in the fulfilment of a function intelligible, if there misplaced? They were not. They were sitting stolidly, side by side, listening to the fat-stock prices over the wireless.

I mention these things, taking the case of Sussex as a symbol of a process which was occurring in its degree all over England, to illustrate my point that the process of destruction was at work long before the war—the forces that generated it spring, indeed, from the very matrix of our times—and will continue, unless checked long after the war is over, with the result that Southern England will cease to be either town or country and will become a single suburb sprawling amorphously from London to the coast.

But the onset of war has enormously accelerated the process of beauty's destruction. All over the country, lanes are being turned into roads, trees and hedges are being cut down, turf is being gashed by lorries, margins and verges destroyed by tanks, fields converted into seas of mud, covered with concrete or asphalt, stacked with dumps or littered with rubbish. Great tracts are studded with concrete posts or bound with barbed wire. Meanwhile barracks, camps, Ack-Ack battalions, searchlight units, aerodromes, air fields, munition works, and all their attachments and appendages in the way of hutments, shacks, rubble, barbed wire, latrines, tents and rubbish dumps, are bidding fair to turn England into a devastated area. It has long been known that with the possible exception of poultry, soldiers create more ugliness, destroy more beauty, and do these things more rapidly, than any other form of living organism. 'It is no use,' said a friend of mine in the Army, referring to the mess that has been made of Box Hill, 'expecting us to do any different. Wherever we go we shall destroy trees, cut up the grass, make mud, leave tins, stick up wire, and generally make a mess.'



Let me for illustration cite two widely different pieces of country with which I happen to be familiar. The first is Hampstead Heath. There is no need to describe that tormented piece of ground, nor to dilate upon the love which those who live beside it come to feel for it. In the last twenty-five years it has been subjected to every kind of outrage. It has been fenced in and asphalted. It has been trimmed and cut and made genteel according to the L.C.C.'s notions of gentility. Huts have been built upon it and shelters: containers for waste paper have been nailed to its trees. Many of the trees themselves have been cut down, while those that remain have been lopped into ungainly shapes. In the last war and again in this one large tracts have become wombs for the gestation of vegetables. Nevertheless it has its merits. . . .

The first thing that happened after the declaration of war was the descent upon the Heath of fleets of lorries to collect sand for the filling of sandbags. Excavators were installed, and day and night the surface of the Heath was scooped away. A hill topped by a great tree became a yawning chasm a hundred yards across. The chasms—there were many of them—were presently fenced in and thus large fresh areas of the Heath have been withdrawn from public use. In the course of these operations, gates were taken down, posts removed, and footpaths, forbidden hitherto even to bicycles, were opened to the sand-bearing lorries. Presently, there were barracks, searchlights and guns, each bringing its attendant train of huts, roads, motor-bicycles and lorries. When the blitz came, the Heath was used as a dumping ground for débris and vast piles of rubble now disfigure the upwards of its long-suffering slopes. More recently two great areas of this tract of land which belongs to the public, and most of which was left to the public, with the deliberate intention that it should be used for their pleasure and recreation, have been seized and enclosed within barbed and anti-invasion wire. I may not, I suppose, say what is being done within those two tracts—in fact, residents are forbidden either to approach, or to inquire—the situation having now been reached in which not only does the Army consider itself entitled to take what it pleases in its determination to protect England from its inhabitants and localities from their residents, but to forbid the inhabitants to refer to what it takes and does. I confine myself, then, to saying that the effect of these enclosures has been to withdraw from public use—and

incidentally to devastate past recovery what has been withdrawn—so much of the remaining area of the Heath, that, if the war continues for another two years, all that will be left of Hampstead Heath will be a few fenced-in paths along which the public will be carefully shepherded by the guardians of guns and the growers of vegetables in perpetual apprehension lest they should by inadvertence stray upon the land that has been filched from them.

In the areas that do still remain amenities which have been enjoyed ever since the Heath was first used by the public have been withdrawn. The reaction of many people to the fact of war may be summed up in the phrase: 'There's a war on. Let's shut something,' and accordingly, on the declaration of war, two of the bathing ponds on the Heath were incontinently closed and have remained closed more or less ever since. One pond remains open for men, but women last summer had no facilities for bathing at all. The sand-taking, the hill-removing, the road-making, the huts, the lorries, the allotments—all these, no doubt, are justified on the grounds of military necessity. But why shut the bathing ponds, and why disfigure what remains of the Heath with piles of rubbish?

The point of these questions lies not merely in my inability to resist the pleasure of giving vent to the grievance of a long-standing resentment, but in their ability to introduce what seems to me to be an important distinction. The distinction is between such disfigurement of the country as may be necessary as ancillary to the war effort and that which is the result of mere lack of consideration, the by-product of the thoughtlessness of those who, having never cared about beauty one way or the other, regard those to whom it is important as poseurs, cranks, highbrows, and unmitigated nuisances, assisted by the spiritlessness of those whose business it is to protect beauty and to protest when it is needlessly rifled, but who, out of timidity or laziness, accept the overriding plea of military necessity, when it is, in fact, very far from being overriding. Thus we have two categories of cases. In the first are those in which military necessity justifies beauty's destruction; in the second, those in which beauty is destroyed not because destruction is necessary, but because nobody has made it his business to find out whether it is necessary or not. Cases which fall within this second category may be further subdivided into those for which no military necessity can be urged, since H.M.

Forces might just as well have gone elsewhere, and those in which there is a justification in terms of convenience for taking place A rather than place B, but the gain in convenience is so slight that, if we were disposed to rate beauty at more than two straws' value, we should, even in wartime, have the courage to insist on place B being taken, because beauty still counts, and the loss of much beauty is more important than the gain of a little convenience. Let me illustrate by citing my second tract of country—the Lakes.

But now, having saved up the outrages upon the Lake District for the main illustration of my thesis, I find that military necessity which is adduced for the Lakes' defilement is also invoked to prevent me from mentioning where it is and what. I can, I suppose, mention in a general way workmen's dwellings, pumps, factory installations, new roads, bases for this, that and the other with their attendant hutments, but I cannot for obvious reasons say where they are. The fact that the very military necessity which they urge in justification of their depredations can be employed to silence the voice of criticism and protest ought to make the authorities doubly careful before they rape beauty, which can no longer be defended. It is like hitting a man whose hands are tied. Let me, then, confine myself to pointing out that the Lake District is a pre-eminent example of a case falling within the second category, though possibly within the second division of the second category. The Lake District is the most beautiful and the most vulnerable area in England: its beauty is at once sturdy and frail; frail because it depends upon a remoteness easily destroyed, a peace readily shattered, an absence of roads which can be all too quickly made, a freedom from ugly buildings which can be all too expeditiously constructed, a bareness of outline which can be all too quickly blurred (as, for example, by the plankets of firs planted by the insatiable Forestry Commission), and a harmony of valley and hill, of cultivation and wildness, and, consequently, of agricultural and pastoral interests, such as exist in a similar perfection nowhere else in these islands. The Lakes are also possessed of the capacity to arouse in those who have once fallen under their spell a love as intense as it is abiding. Also—I shall return to the significance of this—the Lake District is the first and foremost candidate for the rôle of National Park. Hence the importance of leaving it undefiled even in wartime. For nothing will convince me that the pumping stations and the



factories and the huts and the bases and all the rest could not have been accommodated with equal convenience elsewhere—I think, for example, of the vast spaces of moorland in Northumberland, on the Simonside moors, for instance, or of the empty tracts of Hadrian's Wall—or with a convenience so little less, as not to weigh in the balance of any civilized scale of values against the preponderating value of handing down the Lake District intact to the world that is to come after the war.

The Lake District having failed me as an illustration, I cast round for alternatives, that *may* be mentioned, albeit with circumspection. Where is the half-mile that contains the most and the greatest beauty in England? I answer without hesitation that it is that which runs along the backs of the Colleges at Cambridge, and of that half-mile the crown is the three hundred yards or so which stretch behind King's. There are flowers, there are the great trees, there is the turf, there are the exquisite bridges, and there is the view of the college behind. This place has been chosen for the aggregation of some hundreds of lorries. They have gashed the turf and trampled the flowers; they have been driven in sheer exuberance of disinterested Yahooism over the bridges; their ungainly carcasses shut out the view of the colleges. Anything more inappropriate, any greater insult to the centuries which rejoiced to make England beautiful than this most characteristic product of the century that does not scruple to make it ugly, it would be difficult to imagine. We ought to have noticed by now that beauty shrivels at our touch, and at least have learned the decency not to touch it. Did military necessity dictate that the lorries should be planted precisely here?

Again, it is no doubt necessary that masses of lorries should be available in central London, but does military necessity demand that they should be strung out *all along* Kensington Gardens, as though the object of those responsible for their disposition was to see how large an area of the Gardens the lorries could be made to cover.

An Order in Council was made in September 1940 which authorized War Agricultural Executive Committees to give farmers permission to plough up the paths running across their fields. Very good! But are we, therefore, to be debarred from the use of these footpaths for the rest of the war and for so long afterwards as the food shortage persists? Let me explain. Nobody in the

present emergency can with reason object to the ploughing up of footpaths. The obligation to turn your tractor when you have ploughed half-way across a field because you have come to a footpath is burdensome to a degree, and is often not observed even in peacetime. It is simpler and quicker to plough right across a field before turning, and everybody agrees that in wartime this ought to be done. What is important is that, once the path is ploughed, people should be permitted to tread it down again. In other words, the fact that it has been ploughed should not be allowed to entail its withdrawal from public use. The loss of crops involved in the treading down of ploughed footpaths would be minimal—an ingenious defender of our rights of way has calculated that a diagonal footpath two-and-a-half feet wide running across a ten acre field would involve a diminution of the total production of the field of rather less than a half per cent—the advantages great. They are the maintenance of traditional rights and the meeting of current needs. The rights are to the use of footpaths which usually constitute short cuts between villages; they are very pleasant to the walker, and have been used by the public from time immemorial. The needs are, first, the needs of the villager; secondly, the needs of the considerably increased rural population, and especially of evacuated children, for somewhere to walk out of the reach of the cars and the lorries, which incidentally are killing about 9,000 people (army lorries alone) a year; thirdly, the needs of the townsman for recreation and the refreshment of country sights and sounds.

This last may be urged as a purely utilitarian consideration. Let us suppose that we forget the existence of beauty; that we consent to overlook the fact that man has an æsthetic sense or, if you prefer it, a soul. Even so, I would ask those who believe in the war, the whole war, only the war, and nothing but the war, whether it is wholly wise to forgo that increase of efficiency which the relaxation of tension and a little time with nature may bring. And where, I would ask further, are people to go in search of that recreation if not along the footpaths? The roads? But they are monopolized by the lorries. The woods? They are sacred (or at any rate, until recently were) to the preservation of pheasants. The moors? They are reserved for the shooting of grouse. The coasts? They have been earmarked for the Tank Corps or the R.A.F. We have been told that alternative facilities must be provided. What

facilities, and who is to determine whether they are adequate? Are three sides round a field instead of a diagonal footpath across it adequate? Or since, after all, there is always the road, is going round by the road adequate? Moreover, one notices that no machinery is specified for ensuring the restoration of the footpaths after the war is over; nor does a cursory knowledge of the history of the English enclosures and an acquaintance with the habits of English landlords and farmers give grounds for assurance in this direction.

Similarly with the huts, the barbed wire, the concrete and the asphalt that disfigure the Lake District. We are told that all this will be cleared away. Why should it be cleared away? There is no profit in clearing away, and when in England has concern for beauty ever led us to take action which failed to bring us profit? Each of the successive industrial revolutions through which England has passed has littered the countryside with its debris. The next revolution does not remove the debris of the last; it leaves it derelict and adds its own.

So much for complaints! I come now to remedies, but before remedies can be indicated I must be permitted to mention one or two general principles upon the acceptance of which their claim to efficacy must be based. In spite of the incorrigible Philistinism of the English, we are, I think, most of us prepared to concede that beauty is important, and that the freedom to enjoy beauty, where one sees it, is one of the ends for which we are fighting. For we are fighting, are we not, for the individual's right to live the good life as he conceives it, without let or hindrance from others, provided that he himself does no injury to others? Let us suppose that he conceives it to lie in the enjoyment of natural beauty; then, if it should turn out that in the course of winning the war we have deprived him of the conditions in which alone the good life, as he conceives it, can be lived, our victory will to this extent have been barren. So much for the first of my principles.

Now for the second.

I have contended that though military requirements are paramount, they are not exclusive, that other things count even in wartime, and that, when the other things are important and the loss of military convenience involved by taking account of them is small, then some loss of military convenience should be accepted.



Now these contentions obviously involve certain assumptions, and, in particular, two. The first is an assumption about the present situation. It is a fallacy to think of the war and the peace which is to follow it as two slices of history, periods of time which are juxtaposed but separate. In fact, they are the overlapping phases of a developing revolution. It follows that to treat the war as one thing and the peace as another, with the implications, first, that all we have to think about now is the winning of the war, leaving the peace when it comes to look after itself, and, secondly, that what we do in the course of winning the war will have no effect upon the ensuing peace, is a mistake. Refusing to make this mistake, we shall deduce that from some things which might help us to win the war we should nevertheless refrain precisely because they would prejudice the peace. Thus if it would help us to win the war to cover all the Lakeland fells with firs, or to build factories round Wastwater, the acceptance of the principle might debar us from planting the firs and erecting the factories. Again, because the planning of the England of the future is being postponed until the peace, other ravages which have no bearing upon victory in war, but are merely the latest expressions of the system of private profit-making without reference to communal need, upon which we have been brought up and which dies so hard, are being committed throughout the length and breadth of the land. For example, though the private jerry-builder is for the moment out of action, his activities are only postponed; meanwhile, his advance guard, the private land speculator, is very much in action, as witness, for example, the following public letter from a country lover in Cornwall:

'Here in Cornwall—one of our most sparsely populated counties—land which was let in 1930 at one pound an acre, and which was farm land for hundreds of previous years, is being sold for building at the rate of £1,280 per acre.

'The only reason for this price is the fact that it is the only land left for development within the urban area. Actual value is £30 to £35 an acre, but monopoly value extorted is forty times that price.

The Duchy of Cornwall, a public body, is the culprit, and the vicious example set by them is being copied successfully by all local land jobbers and speculators.'

This brings me to the second assumption involved which, in its turn, depends on the acceptance of a scale of values. This I must announce dogmatically. Some things are better than others, some

ways of life more desirable, some communities more civilized. Beauty is one of the things that are better, and an appreciation of and respect for it are factors in the ways of life that are more desirable and elements in the civilization of communities that are more civilized. In the nineteenth century the young were at least brought up to pretend to love the highest when they saw it, and genteel culture was the homage which barbarism paid to beauty. In the twentieth century the public schools have taught them to heave a brick at it, excepting only when it presents itself in the form of natural beauty.

This brings me to a new point. Though we despise art, we do not in this country mind confessing to a love of nature. Indeed, one of the most hopeful features of our generally depressing times is the growing awareness of natural beauty among those who have come to maturity in the period between the two wars. The English have the ugliest towns and the most beautiful countryside of any people in the world, and the credit for the discovery of this fact must go, on the whole, to the present generation. Until the last twenty-five years their inhabitants took the towns for granted, and on Sundays lounged in their streets until the pubs opened. The present generation sees these agglomerations of industry and hovels for what they are and, turning its back upon them, goes, when it gets the chance, in increasing numbers to the country. Hiking, in fact, has replaced beer as the short cut out of Manchester.

If I am right, the conditions in which alone this, the one beneficent revolution of our times, can go forward and prosper, are being imperilled, the one avenue through which beauty comes readily to the young men and women of this country is in danger of being blocked.

The consequences are appalling to contemplate. The beauty of England is the one certain thing which stands between the post-war world and the inauguration of a 'Brave New World'. For consider . . . . If we win the war, if the world is made safe for democracy, if, in fact, our civilization survives at all, it will survive with greatly increased leisure. Given a reasonable distribution of economic benefits under some form of socialism, we may look forward to a world in which men and women will be assured of a financial competence in return for some four or five hours' machine-minding a day. What, one wonders, would

such a world be like? I can visualize an England in which whatever land is left over from cultivation, is covered with a network of golf courses and tennis courts, or whatever form of ground the popular game of the future requires. Our roads will be covered with a solid mass of cars wedged into a stationary and inextricable jam. Our coasts will be ringed with a continuous series of resorts at which jazz bands will discourse negroid music to tired sportsmen and their over-nourished wives. A deluge of news warranted not to arouse thought will descend upon the defenceless heads of the community through every device of television and telephony that the science of the future may have been able to perfect. New creeds and cults will spring up like mushrooms overnight to amuse men's extended leisure, to exploit their unused energies and to minister to their starved souls. In fact, 'Brave New World' and all that it stands for!

Now I am anxious to beat the Nazis, but I am not anxious to beat the Nazis in order to establish 'Brave New World'. Yet such, I am convinced, will be our fate unless some provision is made for the re-creation and refreshment of man's spirit in intercourse with natural beauty as an alternative to the standardized, mass-produced, creation-saving, amusements with which it will pay a new race of entrepreneurs to tap the pockets and debauch the leisure of the economically comfortable and enormously leisured proletariat whom the Socialist Utopia of the future will provide. It is in these more ultimate social considerations that the importance of preserving the countryside lies. But it will not be preserved, unless we are prepared to plan its preservation and to plan it now.

What should be the main features of such a plan? The following are notes which might form the basis for consideration by the newly established Ministry of Works and Planning.

## COUNTRY

1. *Provision of National Parks.* The right policy to adopt here is a policy of 'letting well alone'. This means that while existing industries—e.g. sheep farming—should be permitted and encouraged, no disfiguring industries—quarrying and mining—should be permitted (with certain exceptions in the case of existing quarries). The policy of 'letting well alone' means also no villas, no wide concrete roads, no (super) pubs (on the model, for example, of the rebuilt 'Dun Bull'), no pylons, no sprucing



up, no iron railings, no privet hedges, no asphalt paths. It means, further, the acceptance throughout the whole National Park area of the æsthetic principle as the over-riding principle. The question should not be, Does this pay? It should be, Does this preserve or destroy beauty? It should be a charge upon the authority administering the National Park to ensure availability of sleeping accommodation and food. Existing organizations of a non-profit making character, e.g. Y.H.A., H.F., C.H.A., W.T.A., should be given every encouragement to establish approved hostels in National Park areas.

2. Access to a substantial area of uncultivated land, mountain and moorland, should be given as a matter of course to the public, and the State should make itself responsible for safeguarding the right of access. The existing Access Act is hopelessly complicated and restrictive, and imposes impossible financial burdens upon those making application for access. The restrictions and complications should be removed.

3. Restoration of all footpaths and bridleways closed as a result of War Regulations or as a result of illegal obstruction. Creation of new footpaths and maintenance of all existing paths by public authorities.

4. Acceptance of principle that footpaths are of interest to citizens as a whole and not merely to local people and local bodies. The law to be amended accordingly.

## TOWNS

The effect of the successive industrialization of the last one hundred and fifty years has been that of a swarm of locusts. Industrialism, that is to say, descends upon an area, develops it, and then passes on to a hitherto untouched area, leaving the old area to decay. The locust policy should stop. Whereas the present policy is to allow such places as Jarrow and Gateshead to rot while development spreads into hitherto untouched rural areas, the right policy should be to re-develop Jarrow and Gateshead.

There should be restrictions on the growth of existing towns and very severe restrictions, if not a total ban, on the growth of very large towns. No growth should be permitted except in accordance with a planned scheme which must take into account the necessity for rural areas round each city. The phrase 'rural areas' does not mean merely leaving a green band or belt of

exiguous width. Further, there should be a clearly defined boundary between town and country, which means that there should be no more sprawling.

The Ludlow type of town should be left intact.

### MACHINERY

The present system of numerous Local Authorities under the Ministry of Health is inadequate and present laws are unsatisfactory. They are optional in too many respects where they should be compulsory. Many Local Authorities have no desire to operate satisfactory planning schemes. Too many vested interests—builders, contractors, land and house agents and shopkeepers sit on Local Councils. Even if Local Councils are willing to protect their areas, they are not always able, owing to lack of funds and personnel, e.g., in a beautiful area suitable for a town and country planning scheme the population may be very small, and only a small sum raised in rates. Hence, the State should step in. Furthermore, the fact that so many different authorities are concerned precludes the possibility of a well-thought-out and operated national plan. We need, therefore:

- (i) A Ministry of Town and Country Planning as a source of all executive authority, subject, of course, to Parliamentary control. Its function should be to supervise and advise regional commissions and over-ride them, if they do not do their work properly.
- (ii) A number of Regional Commissions set up by, and responsible to, the Ministry. The Commissions should comprise:—
  - (a) Local Authorities: (i) Town; (ii) Country.
  - (b) Representatives of country organizations, planning societies, architectural bodies, etc., e.g., Town and Country Planning Association, C.P.R.E., Ramblers' Associations, Inst. Brit. Architects, etc.
  - (c) Representatives of the Ministry itself.
  - (d) Parliamentary representatives.
- (.ii) National Parks would be outside immediate control of these Commissions. For them, there is suggested a special Central Commission under the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. It would appoint local Commissions to manage each park and report to central Commissions.

(iv) Plans for towns and layout of streets and building estates in each area to be submitted to and approved by the Regional Commissions.

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## SELECTED NOTICES

*Put Out More Flags*, by Evelyn Waugh. Chapman & Hall, 8s.

In the impressive list of Mr. Evelyn Waugh's satirical novels, *Put Out More Flags* seems to occupy a midway place. Not so good a book as *A Handful of Dust*—up to the present day Mr. Waugh's most mature production—it is undoubtedly far better than the disastrous *Scoop*, the slowest and least readable of all his stories. But, if it falls short of *A Handful of Dust*, this new novel is, at any rate in a number of isolated passages, equally well written. When he began his career, Mr. Waugh's writing was often sketchy and haphazard. *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* were to adult novels what a brilliant charade is to a full-length play. They depended for their effect on Mr. Waugh's really astonishing gift of comic improvisation, on the exuberance with which he pursued his personages and on a certain beguiling mixture of geniality and feline cruelty. In *A Handful of Dust* one was delighted to discover that the novelist, grown slightly less vivacious, was still capable now and then of lightning claw-strokes. The element of *surprise* was again employed—this time, however, to very different purpose: and an extremely audacious twist of the narrative (by which the heroine, when told of her little boy's death, supposes that it is her lover who has been killed and is enormously and unselfconsciously relieved when she learns of her mistake) 'came off' so completely as to act like a minor physical shock on the reader's nervous system.

The weakness of *A Handful of Dust* was the romantic partiality that the writer tended to display for various characters. He made fun of, but was evidently fascinated by, their patrician background: and the scenes in which a devoted servitor teaches the young heir to jump is somehow out of key with the remainder of the narrative. It does not suit Mr. Waugh to admire his personages—or rather, if he admires, what he admires should be their appealing enormity or picturesque extravagance. A hint of sentimental approval is always jarring; and thus, in his latest book, while he is at his best when he describes the blackmailing exploits of Basil Seal, he is least at ease when he depicts, with a sort of nostalgic appreciation, the expensively ramshackle home-life of Alastair and Sonia Digby-Vane-Trumington—

Basil had attended Sonia's levees . . . since the days of her first dazzling loveliness, when, almost alone among the chaste and daring brides of London, she had admitted mixed company to her bathroom. . . . There were usually three or four breathless and giddy young men . . . gulping Black Velvet in the steam. . . .



—or dwells on the superlative elegance of Basil Seal's mistress, the beautiful but alcoholic Mrs. Lyne. That last is a portrait which he begins rather badly but finishes (one must admit) very well indeed. The original draft is faintly reminiscent of Mr. Michael Arlen. It has also a touch of the literary gossip-writer:

A stranger passing the open door of her compartment might well have speculated on her nationality and place in the world. . . . She wore the tvery of the highest fashion, but as one who dressed to inform rather than to attract. . . . All her properties—the luggage heaped above her and around her, the set of her hair, her shoes, her finger-nails, the barely perceptible aura of scent that surrounded her, the Vichy water and the paper-bound volume of Balzac on the table before her—all these things spoke of what (had she been, as she seemed, American) she would have called her 'personality'.

But Mr. Waugh, luckily, soon recovers himself, and his account of the collapse under war-strain of Mrs. Lyne's organism and of her slow deliberate saunter downhill into chronic drunkenness is in his finest vein of unaccented tragedy-comedy.

It is one of the drawbacks of satirical writing that, whereas a satirist's recriminations may be brilliant and even poetic, the remedies he proposes seem often strangely futile. In religious faith a Roman Catholic, Mr. Waugh (one gathers) is now in politics some sort of romantic Tory. Having collected his assortment of Georgian left-overs (many of them pleasantly familiar from a reading of his previous novels) he shows them responding to life in London and the country during the first dismal months of the Great Bore War. Basil Seal practises comic blackmail and desultory seduction: his mistress drinks: his sister, who loves Basil with an absorption that is something more than sisterly, looks after her huge house and minds her evacuees: Basil's mother confers with an ancient crony and worries about finding her son a suitable war job: Ambrose Silk, the cultured paederast, slips into a comfortable berth in the Ministry of Information. Ambrose, by the way, is an exception proving the rule that Mr. Waugh writes best when he is most envenomed. For Mr. Waugh dislikes this character, but neither enjoys nor understands him (as he understands, for example, Basil's drunken mistress): and the result is a sketch that, though catty and entertaining, never penetrates very far beneath the surface and suggests a slight confusion of moral and social values. The fact that Ambrose has sunk to the level of Charlotte Street, moves in the wrong kind of Bohemian circles, among the noisy and undistinguished haunters of studios and pubs, causes the novelist (one cannot help thinking) to regard him from an unnecessarily superior standpoint. Poor Ambrose may have his vagaries and his affectations, but Mr. Waugh need not pass him by on the other side of the road with a gesture that is not only condemnatory but also descending! The Churchillian renaissance which concludes the narrative, when the sluggish and self-indulgent relics of the between-war period spring into sudden patriotic life, and Basil and Alastair decide to join the Commandos, was a military and political, but scarcely a moral, portent.

PETER QUENNELL

*An enquiry into British War Production. Part I: People in Production*, prepared by Mass-Observation. The Advertising Service Guild. Limited edition 10/- net.

OF no subject have more violent and conflicting opinions been expressed than of British War Production. The most emphatic views are held by those least qualified to know: and though theories, anecdotes and statistics exist to support any position one wishes to adopt, no extensive or scientific survey has been produced, to form the basis of common agreement or disagreement, until the appearance of *Change 3*.

For those who have not yet discovered *Change*, it is the bulletin of the Advertising Service Guild, 10 Hertford Street, W.1. No. 1 was on Clothes Rationing, No. 2 on Home Propaganda, and No. 3 the first instalment of an Enquiry into British War Production, covering *People in Production*. These three surveys have all been prepared by Mass-Observation; but No. 3 will be followed by a second and complementary study of the *Economic Strategy* of War Production by Dr. Balogh.

*People in Production* has already been issued in a limited edition of bound galleys, but by the time this review appears, it should be available to the public at 10s. By itself, it is a Mass-Observation survey only of the human factors of War Production, but I say without hesitation that no book published in this war anyway approaches *Change 3* as a constructive contribution to the war-effort, to say nothing of its wider sociological significance. It will always be a landmark in the history of industrial sociology; and if those in Government, industry and politics pay it the attention it deserves, it should mark the turning point of the war on the production front.

British War Production, the report explains, is a subject of great complexity, since it involves such an enormous number of variables in addition to the common sex, age and class groupings. The *horizontal* cross-section reveals five main distinct, but interacting and interreacting groups: (i) the Services, needing equipment all the time, but different types of equipment in different proportions as one phase of war succeeds another; (ii) Supply Ministries, whose function is to plan to meet the demands of (i) and replan when those demands are replaced by new demands; (iii) other Ministries, allocating man-power as, when and where it is needed, making arrangements for its transport, accommodation and feeding, having regard to the dislocation of arrangements not only through expanded war-industry and altering demands, but also through enemy action by air, land and sea; planning the regular supply of raw materials and delivery of finished goods without dislocating the essential civilian services on the one hand and the movements of troops on the other; (iv) hundreds of large, thousands of medium-sized and tens of thousands of small factories, working to the directions of (i), (ii) and (iii), but always with an inevitable time-lag, between them employing millions of men and women, a large percentage of whom are doing jobs new to them; and (v) what is called 'the public' consisting of the foregoing, plus an almost equal number of people engaged on what has stupidly been described as 'non-essential' but is in fact 'essential maintenance work' for the most part. All these five groups are subject, individually and collectively, to the propagandist pressure of events, press, radio, film and conversation; and produce by their opinion of the value

the work they are doing, modifications of the work-situation, both material and psychological.

Furthermore, even when the glib abstract War Production has been broken down into these groupings, it is plain that in terms of human factors we are faced with a number of abstracts, instead of one, and that each of them must be broken down in its turn until we reach the reality behind the abstract, millions of human beings, every moment of whose lives working, sleeping, feeding, travelling, must be regarded as having a relation to the optimum productive capacity of the nation at war.

These factors are not constants; and the *vertical* cross-section of Industry reveals an equally complex set-up, of which some of the main strands are: (i) the traditional relations between Government, Management and Workers at peacetime, as remembered under *laissez-faire* capitalism operating for personal profit, with its disciplinary sanctions of wages and dismissal; (ii) the wartime necessity of production for use, involving the compromise adaptation of peacetime machinery without attempting to change (a) the permanent economic basis of our society, or (b) the human Government-Employer-Worker patterns of thought and feeling, which had grown up through years of conditioning; resulting in (iii) a situation in which the purely economic incentives on which it was assumed that industry existed were negated, on the employer's side by E.P.T. and on the worker's side by the Essential Works Order and restriction of consumable goods; (iv) springing from this, a desire on the part of industrialists to end the war as quickly as possible to secure a return to the *status quo* of 1939, on the part of the workers a contentment with the wartime security, which they did not enjoy during peace, *provided that Victory* is inevitable, as so many Government propagandists have pronounced it to be; among the workers, there is a fairly general conviction that peace will mean depression; Trade Union leaders seem to think that if they can restore the *status quo* of 1939, they will satisfy the workers without losing their own usefulness, while a minority of workers demand the nationalization of industry, and worker control on management as the conditions of winning the war and safeguarding the peace; in this former, they are supported by a great body of opinion).

*People in Production* makes no pretence at being an encyclopædic survey, even in terms of human factors. Seven locations were studied, differing in type of product, labour and welfare traditions, industrial history and geographical setting. Material was gathered by direct and indirect interview, using qualitative and quantitative methods; and this, collated with personal and public documents was codified in five main sections. *Tongues* analyses the penumbra of inefficiency in industry, which envelopes industry and reacts upon efficiency. *Bodies* deals with the utilization of man-power, *Times* with hours, age, rest-pauses, absenteeism, *Feelings* with the work, climate, health, means, etc., and *Relations* with the whole set-up of Government, Management and Workers, with strikes and the direction of production, welfare, leadership and morale.

Every section is crammed with important new data and the evaluation of it. But what are even more important than this are the modern-minded



analysis of sociological relationships hitherto ignored or distorted by partisan and the action points, arising from this analysis. Ministries, industrialists, politicians, propagandists and Trade Union leaders should study these action points with the greatest care. Some may be impossible, owing to wartime scarcities. Many of them can and should be acted on as soon as possible.

It is impossible to condense the gist of over 200,000 words in a brief review though I have tried to indicate its scope above. A few quotations will give the savour of the report, which is written with the spit-fire wit and punch characteristic of Harrisson.

'The Prime Minister has called 1942 the year of the crisis of man-power. There is a real danger (to war production) that man-power be thought of in terms of numbers of men and women. . . . While quantities are important, qualities (as the A.T.S. have discovered) are equally so. To a noticeable degree, the stress in the industrial field is still on labour quality and its associate, *time*, rather than on quality and its associate *effort*. It would be almost equally valid and perhaps more thought-provoking to describe 1942 as the year of the crisis of *mindpower*.'

'The indiscriminate demand for 100% use of *everything* is a contradiction in terms. . . . The question is rather one of getting 100% of optimum out of 100% of the *people*, whatever this may involve in terms of everything else.'

'What was special about Dunkirk? Simply this. Here was a time when people expected a great disaster. The disaster was great, but *not so great as had been expected*. The consequent relief at the disaster being less great . . . liberated a dynamic energizing effect in a forward, urgent, realistic way.'

'One of the reasons why they (the problems of war production) have not been explained is that *nobody is responsible for thinking in terms of people's minds in production*. . . .'

'Though they overlap at many points, there are clearly two distinct sides to industry, the side who decide what to do or help decide, and the side who do it. . . . There is a special aspect of it which is becoming more acute. One side, the tellers, are temporarily in the position of being told to (by the Government). Their principal fear, and in some cases their principal mental preoccupation, is about getting out of this position after the war into at least the same *sort* of position as 1939. The other side, the doers, who do what they are told, have precisely the opposite concern. . . .'

'So long as the worker is working for *somebody else*, these restrictions, inhibitions, experiences, mythologies of relationship cannot fail to operate though they may be temporarily obscured. A minority of workers consciously elevate this to a theology. This finds expression in the detailed anxiety about the reinstatement of precise pre-war privileges after the war. It is possible that if this existing relationship which persists unaltered in the war was drastically modified, *the relationship between hours and output might be modified too*.'

These quotations are selected almost at random. They do not represent a summary of the arguments of the report, which demands complete and careful reading, followed by immediate and sweeping action.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

A LIVING DEATH. *Grey Eminence*. By Aldous Huxley. Chatto & Windus, 12s. 6d.

Let the worm try to be superlatively himself, the best of all possible worms. The perfect ideal, it seems to me, would be the ideal, not of superhumanness, but of perfected humanity: For at the root of this aspiration to be more than human in knowledge and behaviour we find, at a last analysis, a kind of cowardice, a refusal to cope, except desperately, by the most brutal and mechanical means, with the facts, the complicated, difficult facts of life. The ideas of Plato, the One of Plotinus, the Alls, the Nothings, the Gods, the Infinites, the Natures of all the mystics of whatever religions, of all the transcendental philosophers, the stoic's brutal sacrifice of the physical, instinctive and passionall life, the ascetic's self-castration—what are they but convenient and consoling substitutes for the welter of immediate experience, home-made and therefore homelike spiritual snuggeries in an alien universe? To aspire to be superhuman is a most discreditable admission that you lack guts, wit, and the moderating judgment to be successfully and consummately human.

Good words, these; brave words, and, down to the very worms, characteristic of their author—the author of *Grey Eminence* some ten years ago. Much has happened in these ten years to make the good and the brave turn away from that ideal of humanity perfected and consummate. Many have ceased to cope and, instead, sought a consoling substitute for the no longer merely difficult and complicated, but the irreparably sad and heart-breaking facts of reality. Once again, life has become too bad to be true. Therefore, it is not true. Reality, the reality of human desire and aspiration, has ceased to be a reality. It is an illusion. Ultimate reality, Mr. Huxley reiterates throughout *Grey Eminence*, is only in God; transcendent and immanent at once, it is outside time, outside the human plane of existence, yet latent within the individual consciousness and realizable by the individual who is prepared to give up his self, in the fullest emotional, physical and intellectual sense, to lose his life in order to save it. There is no salvation on the human plane, we are told, not even temporal salvation, for the merely human plane cannot be productive of good other than incidental and fragmentary, carrying within itself the very seeds of its own decay. We are warned against the consequences of 'merely behaving like human beings, of existing unregenerately as natural men. We may sincerely wish to avoid the crimes and follies of past generations; but at the same time we wish to live that natural life which (along with its quota of goodness and beauty) produces the very crimes and follies we wish to avoid.' Such, with its truly cautionary illustrations from seventeenth-century power politics, is the moral and metaphysical theme of *Grey Eminence*. Aldous Huxley has now definitely come out on the side of 'superhumanness'. With another kind of courage, the man who wrote that 'to talk about religion except in terms of human psychology is an irrelevance', who prefixed those mocking capitals to the philosophers' Alls and Infinites, now writes, unflinchingly, of the That and the Thou. To the world, jealous, and a little sad, for having lost him, the change is somewhat disconcerting. Yet it was neither sudden nor surprising. When, in Mr. Huxley's teens, the *Philosopher's Songs* were written, the red light had already gone up in that spiritual niche ahead.

For all his intellectual belief in their perfectibility, Aldous Huxley has always been an incurable stranger among the worms. His books show him as supremely intelligent, if emotionally rather under-privileged, spectator exposed, nine hours out of ten, by his very intellectual superiority, to a rather shocked boredom mitigated by analytical amusement; and who is lacking in the compensatory fellow-feeling, the spontaneous sympathy, warmth or gaiety that could have transcended his—often very justified—exasperation. He never participated: always it was somebody else's round of folly, somebody else's circle of hell. Instead of enjoying the punch, Aldous Huxley, had he been invited, would merely have sighed over Mr. Micawber's folly of dispensing it in the teeth of his insolvency. No wonder then, that to a man of his temperament the contact with his fellow creatures established by meditation on the ultimate unity of all beings should appear more 'real', more 'vital', and more fruitful than direct personal intercourse with actual people. (How Aldous Huxley hates the personal! His one really savage literary attack is the one on Proust and his obsession with the personal in *Eyeless in Gaza*. There, in a merciless and prejudiced passage, Mr. Huxley, revolted and revolting, depicts Proust sponging himself sitting in a foetid and stagnant bath of his own memories.) The only aspect of the worms with which he has ever found himself in living and spontaneous contacts with, were their works of art; the rest were antics. But how he loved those works! How utterly, how completely he was at home amongst them! The climate of his early travel books and anthologies, of *Along the Road*, of *On The Margin*, of *Texts and Pretexts*, is richly civilized, mellowly warm. There is something fulfilled about Huxley's writing on art, on Italy and Spain and music. Not only fulfilled, but high-spirited, at times positively boisterous. He was happy and he was at ease. The world, the world on the human plane, was full—there was Pierro della Francesca, so noble; there was Domenichino and there was style; there were all the Bernini Saints in all the Baroque churches about whose contortions he would write with such tender mischief. All human delight was in 'that pearly flesh', those 'delicious pinks' of Rubens, Titian and Renoir; all human dignity was summed up in Bruneschi's cupola of Santa Maria dei Fiore; and the worm could be great in the terms of *Paradise Lost* and Beethoven's first Piano Concerto.

How different all this from the novels, or at least those parts of the novels that deal with the worms' non-creative activities. Gone the nobility, the delight, the exultation. Aldous Huxley is the novelist of frustration and futility, of waste and shame. All his characters are unhappy, all behave badly; although, and the distinction is relevant, *they are not bad*. They are gifted with insight, self-knowledge and the aspiration to do right. But stubbornly, invariably, to their own disgust and misery, they do wrong. They are, the whole lot of them, incurably perverse. They never enjoy their wickedness, and they always know about it. There are no lusty villains in a Huxley novel, no Becky Sharps, no Tom Joneses—only tormented and slightly repulsive figures drawn towards sacrifice and committing sacrilege. Nobody ever enjoys what he is doing, and nobody ever refrains from doing what will ultimately make him ashamed. They know the important and choose the futile. Theirs is a catalogue of



repeated sins against life, against the Holy Ghost, against talent, against their convictions, their loyalties and their loves. They are bored and never do the one thing that would alleviate their boredom; they always have that extra drink—hating it—which they know will make them sick the next morning. The rich don't enjoy their money and are afraid of death and the poor. The Germans do not enjoy their conquests and are afraid of death and old age. Both go on making money and conquests. Theodore Gumbrell goes out of his way to betray the one woman he loves. Maurice Spandrell takes considerable trouble to seduce several women he does not love in order to enhance his sense of self-degradation. Among all those perverse moral Tantaluses there is not a single satisfactory and, above all, not a single satisfied human being—no one is ever 'successfully and consummately human'. The Huxley good are cranks like the Claxtons, who make fools of themselves, and gluttons and hypocrites of their children; or smug, stuffy, charitable ladies, like Mrs. Foxe in *Eyeless in Gaza*, whose goodness promptly results in her only son's suicide. By conviction or idiosyncrasy, Mr. Huxley has never succeeded in creating a good human being. His one full-scale attempt, Marc Rampion in *Point Counterpoint*, is flat, shadowy and unconvincing. The reader does not believe in him, nor does he suspect, does Mr. Huxley. No wonder, then, that in a crisis, he turned away from the human world.

What is surprising, however—though at the same time profoundly characteristic—is the fact that now that Mr. Huxley has seen the light, he should have chosen for the hero of his biography (a book pre-eminently concerned with mysticism and the propagation of life on the non-human plane) a man who, given the difference in scope, is in the last analysis as great, and for the very reason of his nobler aspirations a greater failure than Spandrell, the squalid debauchee of *Counterpoint*. After an excellent worldly and scholarly education, and a year or so at Court, Francois Leclerc du Tremblay, known in religion as Father Joseph of Paris and as *l'Eminence Grise* to anecdote, entered the Capuchin Order before he was twenty. He made a first-rate friar, distinguished at once for his fervour, his morals and his eloquence. He became a preacher, a spiritual instructor and a successful missionary. He re-evangelized the lukewarm and converted the Huguenots. He helped to found, and directed, a new Order, the Congregation of Our Lady of Calvary. Intensely religious, merciless against his human self, he was passionately concerned to know God. He taught mental prayer by Benet of Canfield, Father Joseph, in Mr. Huxley's words, '... not merely intellectually, but by actual, direct acquaintance, knew something of the other world, the world of eternity ... he had experienced at least the preliminary states of mystical union.' His daily orisons included the contemplation of the Passion of Christ, a spiritual exercise that never failed, day after day, year after year, to evoke in Father Joseph an ecstasy of compassion and anguish. His personal life, if indeed such a life can be called personal, was one of extreme and, to modern minds, distinctly nauseating asceticism: getting up at four in the morning at all seasons, his first meal of the day at noon, keeping four Lentens a year. There was the thin mattress laid on planks, the penitential scourgings and brandings. Doing about four strenuous

wholetime jobs, Father Joseph lived through the Winter of the siege of La Rochelle on dry bread and ditch water in a water-logged summer house.

But the contemplative was also a politician. His diplomatic talents were recognized early. Only half unwilling (for, after all, in serving France he was doing the will of God), Father Joseph allowed himself to be dragged from his convent into the world of seventeenth-century power politics. Between the hours of mental prayer and spiritual instruction to his Calvarian nuns, the once almost holy man plunged himself into court intrigue, the organization of spy rings, and all the shady actions and transactions of international diplomacy. By 1624, Father Joseph had become Richelieu's right-hand man, an unofficial chief of staff of Foreign Affairs, and one of the most powerful men in Europe. Promptly and unscrupulously he used that power for the promotion of the supremacy of the French Crown. To strengthen the Bourbons it was expedient to weaken everybody else. At the Diet of Ratisbon, at the Vatican, at the Escorial, the Grey Eminence, gliding from cell to audience chamber, set Pope against Emperor, Princes against Kings, Catholics against Protestants. In the interest of France the Thirty Years War had to be prolonged at all cost. Father Joseph did prolong it—'a policy whose immediate results in death, in misery, in moral degradation were plainly to be seen in every part of seventeenth century Europe, and from whose remoter consequences the world is still suffering today.'

By 1630 the starving people of a devastated Central Europe ate their own dead. The Capuchin, still weeping his daily tears for the suffering of the man-God on the Crucifix, was not moved. God was French, and Father Joseph was only doing what he knew was God's will. It was all right to lie, spy, corrupt and make people murder each other, as long as these deeds were committed in execution of the Divine will and not for their own sake; as long as he committed them in a spirit of perfect indifference and detachment, the deeds could do no harm to the Capuchin's soul, he could 'annihilate' them in God. In his later life, however, Father Joseph seemed to have found it more hard to establish contact with God. His mystic vision grew dimmer, his sense of unity more faint, a growing sense of failure and bitterness oppressed him. In spite of that feeling—a truly Huxleyan character for all his historically documented existence—Father Joseph went back to 'the bad company of King and Cardinal, ambassadors and spies; back finally to all the criminal follies of high statesmanship; to the Satanic struggle for power in a world which he knew to be a fable, a mere nightmarish illusion, to the orgies of violence and cunning; to the dreary battles of force and fraud. . . . And as a reward for turning his back upon God, they had promised to give him a red hat.'

Such, then, is the story of the man Mr. Huxley has chosen to demonstrate with, that one cannot serve God and politics, this world and the next. And once more, the hero of fallability is not an ordinary human being, striving to be successfully and satisfyingly human, but a monster. A superhuman monster, this time, instead of a sub-human, a fallen angel. The temptation, he succumbed to, is not one of greed or fear but, more subtly, of an impersonal ideal—the greater glory of the King of France; the voice he disobeyed is not his own but God's.

Superhuman in his aspirations, Father Joseph failed more grandiosely and,

For all the world, more calamitously than the Mrs. Viveashs and Walter Bidlakes on their more modest plane. He did more harm. Nor is he exactly an advertisement for the temporal advantages of mysticism. Mr. Huxley, at some length, explains precisely what went wrong with seventeenth-century mysticism: all is blamed on Berulle's substitution of Christ and the Virgin, i.e. a *person*, as an object of love and contemplation for the undifferentiated Godhead of the earlier mystics. This is very plausible. At the same time, one cannot help feeling that if something *can* go wrong among the theocentrics, if so nearly perfected a contemplative, someone so gifted with potentialities of goodness as Father Joseph *can* fail so fatally, then it cannot be very safe for ordinary human beings to put all their eggs into the mystical basket. One is inclined to agree with the French people who, distrusting Father Joseph with his abominable taxation for his even more abominable war, held that 'if these be the fruits of mental prayer and the unitive life, they saw no reason why they shouldn't stick to wine and women.' However, Mr. Huxley persists that lasting good cannot be done without the help of the theocentrics, '... unless large numbers of individuals undertake the transformation of their personality by the only known method which really works—that of the contemplatives'. Now, that transformation of personality—for most of us is desirable, essential even—is obvious. Man, whether super, sub, or just man, stands in need of any kind of enlightenment, any new spark, anything that will make him realize his potentialities, which teach him to transcend himself, change his values, break up the chain of new generations poisoned by the fears of the last, bred in fear of themselves and their neighbours, breeding more fear. We need the imagination; the awareness, the enlargement of consciousness of the 'men of vision'. The thought of their world is an exciting, and often a refreshing one. But is theirs the *only known method which really works*? Can anthropocentric man do nothing of himself? Can he never hope to lead his natural life with all its potential quota of beauty and goodness without the ministrations of men whose attitude is that of metaphysical district nurses distributing soup and socks to the deserving spiritual poor? Has he not the courage to build Jerusalem, imperfect, green and pleasant, on this, his, side? Shall man give up now, before he has had his hour, run over to the other plane, renounce his humanity before he has even set his house in order? There is no house, the mystics reply, your house is a myth, an illusion. Is it? Is the reality perceived by the contemplatives, then, the true, the only reality? Do their visions, their annihilations and ecstasies reveal indeed the truth, or are they the mere projections of their subjective personalities? And if they are the truth, is it the only and the last truth? And is truth itself absolute, indivisible and ultimate, or is it relative, multiple and gradual? These are questions, alas, to which there can be no answer. Outside the terms of language conceived for human needs, the contemplatives' plane is unassailable by argument.

And meanwhile, there is love, there is affection, there is pleasure and the sense of life. These too, like the visions, can only be understood by direct experience. Perhaps, philosophically too, Aldous Huxley did not give human beings the chance he denied them as a novelist. Having never kissed the toad, he has never seen it become a prince.

SYBILLE BEDFORD



# CORRESPONDENCE

## ON INTERPRETING THE WAR

To the Editor,

DEAR SIR,

Critics and the public invariably expect from the artist an interpretation of current history. In part, no doubt, they are right. That interpretative function of art has been rather neglected since the end of last century. In part, also, critics share in the dislike which the mass of human beings, engaged in an objectionable task, feel towards any individual who claims detachment. And this task of interpretation is one which we have to shoulder seriously. Judging by the War Artists' exhibitions in London, the problem is not quite so difficult for the painter to solve, though most of the painting exhibited is either slapdash, as if the artist did not care much for his subject, or technically clever and academic, or achieved by a compromise with the artist's ordinary style—the portrait painter paints officers and heroes, and the landscape painter inserts pillboxes. Even Nash, whom one would not have expected to see conforming, has made play with smashed-up aircraft.

Neither the poet nor the novelist seems to find the task which is demanded of him congenial or readily reduced to a really creative and possible form. A surprising thing in English writing has always been our failure to produce realist novelists, or even writers capable of tackling violent events—the easiest to make into interpretative prose—at times when one would have expected it. We produced no interpreter of the industrial conditions in the 1850's—Dickens could hardly be called fully interpretative—and in this war, where there is scope for a cosmically designed novel, nothing has yet appeared, though it is too early to see which way events will modify the course of such a work.

We have had three separate campaigns waged against the poets—the 'younger' poets in particular—for their failure to do what is expected of them. The Rostrevor Hamilton campaign in the *Listener* (demanding more and better pep poetry) can be dismissed, because the Conservative Party can always hire sandwich men if it wants them without impressing writers: so can Robert Lynd's articles in *John o' London's*, on the ground that he has not read enough of the poetry which has been written since 1939 to talk about it. But one cannot ignore Spender's essay in *Horizon* to the same extent. In the first place, nobody can deny that Spender himself did produce valid interpretative poetry in the Spanish war: poetry which was both good art and good interpretation: in the second place, when he says that 'no poet has created in imaginative terms (1) any major event of the war, (2) any statement of the nature of the struggle in which we are involved, either as suffering or as ideas, (3) any positive faith in the democracy for which we are fighting, (4) any effective statement against war', there is enough truth in that to require an explanation from the writers themselves. There has been a very marked change of attitude among the 'new' writers since 1937 or so, with which Spender is not in sympathy, and possibly not even in touch—there is an attitude of passivity, which does not see the war as a struggle in the way that Spain was a struggle—but that does not discredit any of his criticisms. Somehow we have

got to interpret events, or simply bombinate for the rest of our days in an utterly sterile vacuum.

I suppose two of the best interpretative poems to be written under the sort of circumstances which we are facing are Read's 'End of a War' and Spender's 'Armies by Night'. Now neither of these poems is a full-length academy canvas of a 'major event' under (1) above. Both of them completely fulfil conditions (2) and by implication (4). I do not believe that at present (1) and (3) are in any way artistically feasible in verse. Nobody except Mr. Hassall would sit down and write a full-length 'Charge of the Light Brigade' about Singapore, unless he intended to walk backwards along the quay reciting it to the American Ambassador, as Mr. Masefield has been known to recite. Nobody but Mr. Hamilton would write a George and Dragon analysis of war aims and intend it to be taken seriously. Quite obviously, Mr. Spender doesn't expect or want either of these. The best major interpretation of a major event, Rook's 'Dunkirk', was small and personal in scope. It was written within the circle of the war which the individual fighting man sees, a circle in which there are no general principles and no objective except the next point to be occupied or abandoned. It is at this point that the novel and the poem touch hands. Quite obviously, one can and must realize imaginatively the historically important features of a war when one handles them, as Zola or Tolstoy did, as a part of a larger canvas interpreting the whole of Europe. The major barrier to that treatment is the fact that we are an island, isolated from the real Europe, and unable to distinguish it from the dolls' house which our propaganda is making. The 'Free' governments, the idea that Frenchmen enjoy our bombs, all go to show how impossible it is for an undefeated England to provide the outlook and the material for any novel of the stature of *War and Peace* or 'La Débâcle'.

Because of this smallness of scope—limited for the civilian to the crater in his street, and for the soldier to his immediate and rapidly varying field of operations—our best chance of making an imaginative use of events is to confine ourselves, as Read and Spender did, to the small, which we can comprehend, and which we can handle out of our experience—the capture of a small village, the lines seen from a night watch post. Spender does not mention Massey's 'City of Benares', which is technically and poetically so competent and quite uniquely beautiful; but here is one such interpretative poem. And automatically, while it interprets war in terms of suffering, it regards that war not as a struggle at all, but as a calamity. It is impersonal as lightning, unless, possibly inevitable, but not a struggle. In a struggle one fights for something against something. It is like an infection, where the patient or the pathogen may win. Now the writers of the last few years, rightly or wrongly, regard this war as a degenerative, not a conflict process. And that outlook is so alien to Mr. Spender that he prefers to ignore it.

If one reads through the poems written since war broke out, and especially poems from the Forces, one cannot avoid this conclusion. That is why so many writers 'disclaim all responsibility' for the war. It is not that they are either intellectually lazy or intellectually incompetent—like the rest of the nation, at heart, they are just unutterably weary. They have lost the psychological ability to identify themselves with the professed aims of their fellow

men because they realize consciously what those fellow-men realize unconsciously, that we are no longer an integrated body held together by a purpose. We have reached individually that condition of ego-sufficiency which psychiatrists recognize as a cause of clinical neurosis. The state has somehow become, for the majority of Englishmen, 'They', and no longer 'We'. That is the psychological fact which makes the truth of Spender's analysis, but which he will not realize because he sees its conclusion. Poets are only members of the community in which they live. Sometimes they feel more clearly and creatively than the community as a whole, and always they feel as individuals. But 'Poems from the Forces' is only a poetic version of the state we see in psychological out-patients every Wednesday and Friday afternoon.

It is upon this realization that we have to make up our minds. The trouble is not that we are writing and failing to interpret: it is that we are interpreting the national mind and failing to lead it. If the nation is in a pre-neurotic condition, it is our moral duty as writers to attempt to substitute something healthier. Now the psychiatrist will tell you that the only treatment which is likely to re-stabilize the person who has reached this condition of ego-isolation is the provision of some environment which will reintegrate him with his fellow-men. He often finds it in the immediate common purpose of an army attacking an objective, or he may equally find it in the common purpose of a society for stopping the war, however impracticable its programme may be. Adversity near home—Dunkirk, air raids, a bomb on the hospital down the road—all break down this isolation and re-convert individuals to social units. As far as I can see, no therapy short of complete military defeat has any chance of re-establishing the common stability of literature and of the man in the street. One can imagine that the greater the adversity the greater the sudden realization of a stream of imaginative work, and the greater the sudden katharsis of poetry, from the isolated interpretation of war as calamity to the realization of the imaginative and actual tragedy of Man. When we have access again to the literature of the war years in France, Poland and Czechoslovakia, I am confident that that is what we shall find. For our own opportunity to assert the intellectual and imaginative leadership of art we can only wait. There is simply not the opportunity, at present, and by disengaging ourselves from the national neurosis we can only deepen it.

I am certain that it is against this psychological background that we must try to understand what we are doing. The hope of a valid and healthy poetic interpretation of the events of the war is remote at present, though potentially enormous. It is in the field of prose that imaginative interpretation is, most emphatically, possible to any writer with the courage and the necessary technique. The qualifications will be these:

(1) The plain technical competence to handle subjects of unparalleled violence without permitting the plot to disintegrate. The fact which impresses and reimpresses itself upon anyone who reads the work of major novelists written under parallel conditions, Zola in particular, is that throughout the organist is playing the organ, with understanding and full control, and not the organ the organist. The leading characteristic of the 'tough' novelist of the last few years has been his conviction that violence in sufficient quantity controls itself. Writers like Hanley have been conspicuous offenders. It is not



enough to produce a sequence of excessive characters and excessive events, related in immoderate language and interlarded with buggers and bastards specially selected *pour épater les bourgeois*. The effects which are produced by this technic are impermanent, because the shock effect of the words must inevitably diminish with time. And the treatment of incident is so haphazard that it forfeits all point and confuses the author and the reader equally. Surrounded by a continuous deafening *fortissimo*, where no *crescendi* are possible, the reader becomes punch drunk, and can only welcome the end as a cessation of the din. Of recent writers Hemingway perceived this after his first two books, and controlled his incident accordingly. Mikhail Sholokov had sufficient artistry from the outset to avoid the trap by a narrow margin. But it is only by a study of Zola, whose spacing and tone-colour are the chief roots of his claim to be the master of all novelists in the control of violent and excessive incident and character, that one can really learn to keep the matter in hand. The events of this war, and the characters it produces, are violent and are excessive. The element of control is absolutely essential and must be learned.

(2) The ability to detach and treat truthfully the persons and events connected with the Nazi conquest of Europe. This is particularly difficult, and there are no parallels to help us. The chief aim of all war propaganda is the depersonalizing of the enemy. The reader is already saturated with white papers of atrocities, with a personal experience of military violence which no English reading public has ever before undergone, and a stylized conception of the enemy, with whom, in spite of air raids, he has had absolutely no real contact. One cannot evade the issue as Zola was forced to do, where the army of Russia before Sedan is reduced to a line of uniformed figures on a far hill, seen through puffs of cannon smoke by telescope. The writer must come to grips with him factually, unless he is to adopt the expedient of seeing him only as the soldier sees him, a distant source of indiscriminate missiles—which is a concept of the last war, not this one. It might almost be wise to take the plunge and write at least partly in the character of a private in the enemy army.

One feels that on these lines the imaginative interpretation which Mr. Spender wants can and possibly will be found. But while some such interpretation is maturing—it is not possible until the total form of events become clearer—poetry cannot be silent, even though it cannot, on the lines of Mr. Spender's four points, be adequate. Now the four points involve the assumption which Mr. Spender invariably makes, that classicism (or, as he calls it, intellectual exactitude) is a necessary part of interpretative art. It is high time someone denied this categorically. You can be intellectually exact only when you are participating in an integrated purpose, because then you can postulate rules of the game, which may be wrong but are still rules. The Nazis have always had great fun on these lines, and Marxism, because it will not allow tragedy to exist, has always connoted classicism, or that seriously perverse romanticism of which O'Casey is an example. Now Spender has at least once, in an article for *New Writing*, shown that he understands this, and his own work, if one follows it from 1938 to his last book, has shown a gradual movement into quite incontestable romanticism. When he approached Moore and 'The White Horseman' with 'intellectual inexactitude' he really intended, I suppose, to attack imprecision of image.

Now it seems pretty clear to me that while one cannot interpret the present war in any set of sociological or even military rules—the attempt to do this is losing it at the moment—one can produce ‘major’ poetry in the sense in which the Victorians spoke of it, by a thoroughgoing return to romanticism, and a serious effort to reinstate the idea of the tragic myth. By major poetry, I mean poetry which will retain, as ‘Prometheus’ has retained, at the end of a hundred years, the same sort of clinical value for humanity as it possesses the day it is written. It cannot be done through surrealism, because surrealism postulates a similar associative complex in the reader to that which the writer finds in himself—in other words, it is the communication of a neurosis. On the other hand its imagery must be imaginative, copious, and in a measure imprecise, or it will fall short of the power which romanticism exercises over the fully-developed mind, the *whole* man. It was in the realization of this concept that both the poems I quoted as examples of good war poetry—Read’s and Spender’s—found their success. Nowhere in Mr. Spender’s essay could one find any hint that poetry of this ‘major’ variety was either practicable or desirable. He discusses the environment as a ‘property’ of poetry, but assails attempts to elevate it into a common symbol for everyone—Treece’s ‘Armageddon’, for instance, where it is the far more important inner environment which is being drawn upon—as ‘intellectually imprecise’.

What, then, do we conclude from all this? First, that as the poet, like the rest of the nation, is a participant in a common ego-isolation, he cannot write classical interpretative poetry about the war, within the terms of Spender’s four points. Second, that the scope for such an interpretation in prose is there, if anyone will employ the labour and the talent necessary for its realization; in doing which the control of his form among excessive incident will be the main problem, since he is writing, not as Montague wrote, for a public ignorant of the horrors of war, but for one equally experienced or more experienced than himself. Third, that there is scope for a romantic or fantastic interpretation of the state of mind of humanity rather than of events—an attitude which is gradually appearing in Mr. Spender’s own poetry, though he rejects it on principle. As to the anthropomorph which such an attitude will involve, I do not pretend, beyond my own personal liking for the work of Moore and Treece, to predict who will write it. But I am certain it has got to be written—perhaps Read, whose own inspiration will inevitably underlie such work, along with D. H. Lawrence’s, may attempt it—and that it is high time that talk about ‘intellectual inexactitude’ and the attempt to discredit younger writers who will not subscribe to the classical boggy were finally exorcised.

ALEX COMFORT

To the Editor,  
SIR,

Literary controversies are apt, I think, to be inconclusive for the protagonists and dull for the readers. For this reason I did not reply to either of Dr. Borkenau’s previous critical notices of my book, which appeared in *The Dublin Review* for October 1941 and in *The Tablet* for January 10, 1942. But Dr. Borkenau’s third attack on *The Roots of National Socialism*, launched in *Horizon* for March

1942 (pp. 210-19), suggests that he is passing from the realm of criticism to that of propaganda. Therefore I feel reluctantly compelled to deal with the matter.

In general Dr. Borkenau impugns my use of historical evidence, charging me with serious and, by implication, calculated 'inexactitude'. In particular he accuses me of four specific errors or misrepresentations:

(1) Dr. Borkenau states: 'Butler makes Hegel say that history can be schematized into four main periods: Oriental, Greek, Roman, German. A little later he quotes Hegel saying that "the Germanic spirit is the spirit of the new world"'. The translation of the words in inverted commas is quite exact, and, in conjunction with the above-mentioned summary of Hegel's view preceding it, must create the impression, by inference, that Hegel regarded the present age as one of German world-domination. Now though the quotation is exact, the summary is not at all.' In order to demonstrate 'what Hegel really says' Dr. Borkenau then produces a counter-quotation designed to suggest that in my book I had maliciously suppressed the spiritual, Christian and Germanic (as opposed to German) character of Hegel's fourth section of general history.

In answer I venture to borrow Dr. Borkenau's words: 'Now though the quotation is exact, the summary is not at all'. The full quotation from Hegel, which I gave on p. 78 of *The Roots of National Socialism*, runs as follows: 'The Germanic spirit is the spirit of the new world, whose object is the realization of absolute truth as endless self-determination of freedom which has its absolute form itself for content. The vocation of the Germanic peoples is to furnish bearers of the Christian principle.' [*Philosophie der Geschichte*, in *Werke* (Berlin 1848). Vol. ix, p. 415.] Incidentally an old and widely-used English translation by J. Sibree gives 'German spirit' and 'German peoples'. I purposely substituted 'Germanic' for 'German'.

The general question of Hegel's political 'liberalism' is, of course, decidedly debatable: it was recently debated in *Philosophy* (Vol. xv, No. 57, p. 51f, No. 58, p. 190f, No. 59, p. 313f).

(2) Dr. Borkenau states: 'The island of Ruegen, so casually mentioned in a different context, was Swedish at the time when Arndt was born and grew up, and . . . Arndt himself was a loyal Swedish subject, though German was his mother-tongue. This crucial fact seems to have escaped Butler's attention.'

It had not. That is why, after stating that Arndt was a native of Ruegen, I 'casually mentioned in a different context' (on p. 68) that Arndt 'in 1803 had by his writing largely induced King Gustavus Adolphus IV to abolish serfdom in Rügen'. Dr. Borkenau is perhaps aware that Gustavus Adolphus IV was king of Sweden. In the quoted passage I was deliberately contrasting the action of the Swedish king with that of the government of the Prussian king Frederick-William III in 1819 in arresting the too liberal Arndt.

(3) Dr. Borkenau states: 'Butler correctly quotes Wilhelm von Gerlach saying, "right grows out of wrong like flowers out of a hotbed". . . . As an extreme conservative, an over-scrupulous defender of law and order, Gerlach actually rejected the idea of Prussian expansion as incompatible with the tradition of German historical law, and firmly defended Austrian supremacy in Germany. That was one of the reasons of his later rupture with



Bismarck. In Butler's pages this over-scrupulous gentleman is represented as a man declaring that right is wrong and wrong is right—all by means of the one quotation given above and torn from its context.'

I think that judgment is a trifle hasty. On p. 122 of *The Roots of National Socialism* I wrote: 'Bismarck had not previously [i.e. prior to 1866] enjoyed the whole-hearted support of the conservatives themselves, particularly those who looked to the feudal austrophil camerilla in which Manteuffel and the Gerlachs figured prominently. But now conservatives, too, modified their attitude, and the new free-conservative party joined the national-liberals in their support of Bismarck's policy. This coalition meant that the conservatives fully accepted the ideal of national unification.'

(4) Dr. Borkenau states that my account of Nietzsche's end, given on pp. 166-7 of my book, is 'not history at all', in support of which he waves at me the asylum's certificate of Nietzsche's insanity and death from cerebral paralysis.

This certificate would not be incompatible with my account, though as a matter of fact Dr. Binswanger, who attended Nietzsche at the asylum, seems to have been decidedly less positive than Dr. Borkenau in his diagnosis of the origins of Nietzsche's breakdown [cf. *Nietzsche, sein Leben und seine Werke*. R. M. Meyer. (Munich, 1913), p. 174]. Most accounts, however, agree in ascribing considerable importance to the influence of loneliness in pushing this egotistical preacher of ruthlessness towards insanity: see, for instance, the account by Dr. Oscar Levy [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th ed.), vol. 16, p. 453]. Dr. Levy, I might add, is not only an authority on Nietzsche and the editor of the authorized English translation of his works, but also a qualified physician, being a Doctor of Medicine, Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, and Member of the Royal College of Surgeons.

So much for the four prize exhibits which Dr. Borkenau extracted from my 'rubbish-heap of slipshod quotations'. As for the general validity of that aspersions, it may be sufficient to refer to *The Dublin Review* (Oct. 1941, vol. 209, p. 189), in which Dr. Borkenau himself wrote of me and my quotations: 'He is amazingly well read in his subject. The argument of his study is mainly proffered by way of hundreds of quotations from German authors, from Herder to Hitler, quotations which, in themselves, quite apart from any views expressed by the author, constitute an invaluable contribution to the subject.'

Dr. Borkenau, in his review in *Horizon*, next proceeded to give at length his ideas about the historical school. This piece of special pleading would have been improved if Dr. Borkenau had respected the distinction, which he himself previously recognized (in *The Tablet*, January 10, 1942), between 'historicism' and the 'historical school'. The precise scope and significance of the historical school is admittedly a somewhat intricate subject, but I cannot think that further discussion of it with Dr. Borkenau would serve any very useful purpose. Incidentally Dr. Borkenau, in his survey, referred to 'Marx, whom Butler, characteristically, forgets to mention'. If Dr. Borkenau had troubled to consult the index to *The Roots of National Socialism*, he would have discovered that Marx is mentioned on pp. 79, 109, 129-30, 132, 134, 178, 247, 248, 256, 261, 264, 281. For a denouncer of inexactitude, Dr. Borkenau himself is not conspicuously exact.

And Dr. Borkenau may care to know that Lord Elton and Lord Eldon are not identical.

Dr. Borkenau says that I preach pitiless revenge upon the innocent; he accuses me of slander; he suggests that I am a fascist. I suggest that Dr. Borkenau was a little excited when he wrote his review for *Horizon*.

Yours, etc.,

ROHAN D'O. BUTLER

To the Editor,

SIR,

I challenged Mr. Butler on four points of detail, random instances of his method of arriving at an indictment of Germany. Here is my short answer to his objections.

(1) *Hegel*. My contention was exclusively that Mr. Butler had failed to point out the fundamental difference between the terms 'deutsch' and 'germanisch', thus creating the impression that Hegel speaks of German world domination where, in reality, he simply speaks of the supremacy of Western civilization in the modern world. Mr. Butler has not even mentioned this in his answer, and instead speaks of something else, which was never contentious.

(2) *Arndt*. Mr. Butler had accused this upright liberal champion of national self-determination of designs against Scandinavian independence. In reply I had pointed to the fact that Arndt, a native of Ruegen, grew up as a loyal Swedish subject, and that his later ideas about a wider Northern European unity were of the federalist, not of the imperialist type. I sincerely apologize to Mr. Butler for having overlooked, in compiling my final notes, another mention of Arndt, in another place and context which indirectly, though not expressly, describes him as precisely such a loyal Swedish subject. Only, I am sorry to say this, though a lapse on my part, does not, to my mind, improve Mr. Butler's case. In the light of his correction, I must reformulate my contention like this: Mr. Butler, *though* he is fully aware that Arndt grew up a loyal Swedish subject, *nevertheless* accuses him of having had designs against Scandinavian independence. Against Mr. Butler's suggestion, this is what the Quai d'Orsay, during the last war, in a semi-official publication, *Documents du Pangermanism*, quoted from Arndt: 'In the North, Germany's legitimate border is the Eider and the Baltic.' This is conclusive. It is considerably less than was granted Prussia, not only in 1864, but also at Versailles.

(3) *Gerlach*. Mr. Butler had accused Gerlach, a Prussian ultra-conservative of the 1848 period, of furnishing arguments for the doctrine that right is might. I had described Gerlach as an over-scrupulous partisan of the doctrine of historical right, not allowing of any change, least of all violent change, and added that consequently he was a fierce enemy of German unity and of Prussian supremacy, wanting Austria to remain the paramount power in Germany. What does Mr. Butler reply? That other Prussians at another time, for different reasons, joined Bismarck. Logic of Vansittartism!

(4) *Nietzsche*. I had maintained that Mr. Butler had transformed Nietzsche's madness (a 'purely physical accident', in the words of his standard biographer, Mr. Charles Andler) into a Victorian moral melodrama. Mr. Butler now agrees



that the doctor's certificate spoke of cerebral paralysis, a post-syphilitic disease. Why, if he knew of this decisive document did he never once so much as mention it? The qualifications in the certificate have nothing to do with the basic issue. They refer to an 'unusual course' of the deceased's illness, viz. its unusual length. It is well known that a certain percentage of these cases take a time quite out of proportion with the average duration.

I am glad to say that the outspokenness of this last one of a series of three reviews at least achieved what all my reviews of Mr. Butler's book were aimed at: To start a discussion about the 'theoretical' aspects of Vansittartism, instead of monologues. But my success in this matter has, unfortunately, been formal only. Mr. Butler has not deigned to reply to any of my basic contentions in the *Dublin Review*, the *Tablet* and *Horizon*, viz.: That the most outstanding representatives of the school of 'natural law' believed as much and more in power than any champions of 'historicism'; that historicism is an entirely progressive view as compared with the school of natural law: that 'natural law' is as little specifically characteristic of the West as historicism is of Germany'; that Fascism is an international phenomenon; and that its ideological roots must be sought, not in historicism, but in a new anti-historical biologism. It is, apparently, as difficult to make Vansittartites enter into a debate about their basic doctrinal contentions, as to make them reveal in precise and specific terms their political aims.

F. BORKENAU

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